

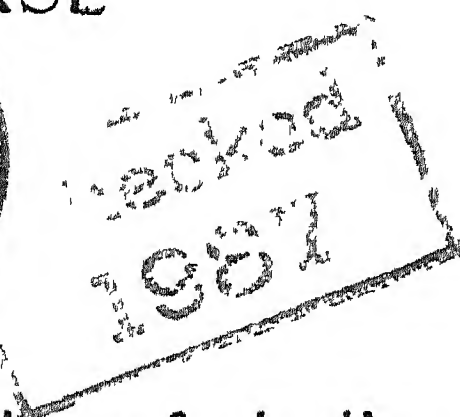
INDIA'S MESSAGE TO HERSELF

OR

A DISCOURSE



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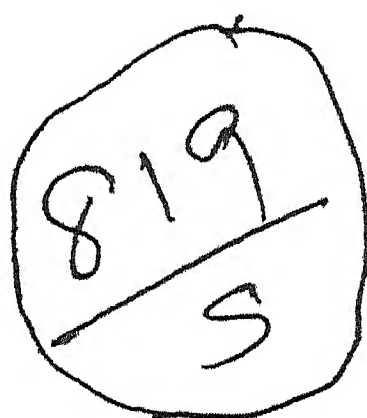


Certain Ancient Ideals of India

BY

PRABHU LAL

of His Highness the Nizam's Service



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ध्यायतो विषयान्पुंसः संगस्तेषूपजायते ।
 संगत्संजायते कामः कामात्क्रोधोऽभिजायते ॥
 क्रोधाद्भवति संमोहः संमोहात्स्मृति विभ्रसः ।
 स्मृतिभ्रंशाद्बुद्धि नशो बुद्धिनाशात्प्रणश्यति ॥

भगवद्गीता अ. २ श्लोक. ६२-६३.

By thought of sensual things attachment grows,
 Attachment leads to fond and vain desires ,
 From unfulfilled desires vexation flows,
 The cause of sad Delusion, which conspires
 To drown old Memory, whose loss enshrouds
 The light of Judgment, divinely bright and pure,
 And wraps it round with dark and threatening clouds,
 Which end in ruin and destruction sure.

All ye, fascinated by the glamour of modern civilization, are earnestly requested to read this.

TO
THE SACRED MEMORY
OF
THE SWAMI RAMA TIRTHA

THIS WORK IS DEDICATED

IN TOKEN OF

his deep reverence for him

as one of the greatest

men of Realisation

of modern times

by his ever-loving admirer

THE AUTHOR

PREFACE



This treatise is a sort of supplement to my previous work, "The Mystery of God and the Universe," and treats of the ancient Ideals of India, that are at present being entirely lost sight of in the affairs of our daily life, and the neglect of which is the sad cause of all our woes and misfortunes.

For the various quotations from the Bhagwad-Gita given in the body of the book, I am indebted to the most valuable English Translation of the said Scripture by the late Swami Swarupananda, the gifted Editor of Prabuddha Bharata.

HYDERABAD, DECCAN, }
10th May 1914. }

PRABHU LAL.

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ओं तत् सत्

Salutations to the One Absolute Reality.



I. INTRODUCTION.

The Swamis Vivekananda and Rama Tirtha when they went to the West for the propagation of the truths of the *Vedanta*, delivered a message—a holy message—which India is still able in her fallen and down-trodden condition to convey to the countries of the West and which was meant for the spiritualization of the inhabitants of the said countries where rank materialism and a thirst for more and more pleasures and luxuries are ruling rampant in the minds of the people. Swami Rama Tirtha in one of his lectures delivered by him in America spoke as follows :—

“ Rama does not blame European nations for their cohorts and armies conquering other nations. That is also a stage in the development of a nation, which is at one time necessary. India had to pass through that stage ; but being a very old nation, she has weighed the riches of the world in the balance and found them wanting ; and the same will be the experience of the nations that aim in these days at accumulating worldly prosperity and riches. Why are all these nations trying to march cohorts to conquer other nations ? What do they seek in all that ? The only thing sought is happiness, joy and pleasure. They seek more luxuries, more pleasures and more power. But let us examine where happiness or power lives ! Does happiness live in the palace or cottage, in the charms of women or in things that gold and silver can buy ? Where is the native home of happiness or power ? The reply is that you have the Heaven within you ; the paradise, the home of Bliss is within you ; and yet you are seeking for

pleasures in the objects of the senses. Oh ! Heaven is within you ; seek happiness not in sense objects ; realise that happiness is within yourself and that in you there is the almighty power of the universe.”

Swami Rama Tirtha gave his message to the western world at a time when the ground there had already been prepared by the Swami Vivekananda who had created quite a sensation among the people of the western countries by his stirring and eloquent speeches treating of the grand ideals of the Hindu Religion. He dwelt at length on this subject while residing in the West, and pointed out that India's ideals were diametrically opposite to those of the West, as will be seen from the following quotation from one of his discourses :—

“ Each man calls that alone real which helps him to realise his ideal. To the worldly minded, everything that can be converted into money is real, that which cannot be so converted is unreal. To the man of a domineering spirit, anything that will conduce to his ambition of ruling over his fellow-men is real, the rest is naught. Those whose only aim is to barter the energies of life for gold, or name or any other enjoyment; those to whom the tramp of embattled cohorts is the only manifestation of power ; those to whom the enjoyments of the senses are the only bliss that life can give ; to these India will ever appear as an immense desert whose every blast is deadly to the development of life, as it is known to them. But to those whose thirst for life has been quenched for ever by drinking from the stream of immortality that flows from far away beyond the world of senses, whose souls have cast away, as a serpent, their scales, the threefold bondages of lust, gold and fame, who from their height of calmness, look with love and complacence upon the petty quarrels and jealousies and fights for little gilded puff balls filled with dust called enjoyment by those under a sense bondage ; to such wherever they be, India the motherland and eternal mine of spirituality, stands transfigured, a beacon of hope to every one in search of that supreme Bliss which

has no end and which does never decay. * * * * *

Now-a-days every body blames those who constantly look back to their past. It is said that so much looking back to the past is the cause of all India's woes. To me, on the contrary, it seems that the opposite is true. So long as they forgot the past, the Hindu nation remained in a state of stupor ; and as soon as they have begun to look into their past, there is on every side a fresh manifestation of life. It is out of this past that the future has to be moulded, the past will become the future. The more, therefore, the Hindus study their past, the more glorious will be their future ; and whoever tries to bring the past to the door of every one, is a great benefactor of the nation. The degeneration of India came not because the laws and the customs of the ancients were bad, but because they were not allowed to be carried to their legitimate conclusion."

Yes, as said by the Swami Vivekananda, signs of a revival are visible, and it appears that tables have been turned ; and the Hindu who saw through tears of despair his ancient homestead covered with incendiary fire, ignited by unfriendly hands, now sees, when the search-light of modern thought has dispersed the smoke, that his home is the one that is standing in all its strength, and all the rest have either vanished or are building their houses after the Hindu plan. But notwithstanding this, the present Hindus have still to learn much from their past, and the necessity of a study of their past by them is growing keener and keener, the more their ideas are being revolutionized under the influence of the modern thought and the University education which they are receiving. India has, therefore, a need of delivering her message to her own children, the occupiers of her soil, who have to learn much from her past. Says the Swami Vivekananda :—

" Not with violent denunciation, nor with all-sweeping criticism must reform be carried on, but with infinite love and infinite patience and through the spread of education which will bring about a natural growth from *within*

And the education must be *from the Hindu point of view* and consist of a justified glorification and expansion and *conscious understanding* of the ideals in Hinduism, for it should be remembered, Hinduism is not a mistake ! Dive deep in and you will fathom its greatness ! Do not be too easily swayed by the glamour of foreign culture and custom ! Study the motherland ! Find out for yourselves the underlying purpose of your race and its life impulse ! There is no sadder condition in the history of this land than that which has befallen us to-day, when we are hypnotized by allowing ourselves to think even for one single moment that India is backward in the vision of ideals. This is the real and heart-rending poverty which stalks the land, the fact that we have lost sight of the spiritual standards of our civilization. *When we become self-conscious, our problems will be solved.*"*

The more one studies the Vedas and other Holy Scriptures of the Hindus, the more one ponders over the philosophies which the Aryan Rishis thought out, the surer he becomes that India is, in truth, the motherland of religions, the cradle of all civilization and the fountain-head of spirituality. In support of the above statement, a passage from an article in the Prabuddha Bharata is quoted below :—

"What heroes they were—the ancient Rishis of old ? Have we truly understood their culture and their strength ? They were at one and the same time the mighty seers of truth and the mightiest nation-makers. Kings trembled before them ; and at their word national destinies were changed. Their strength must become our strength. To them the whole world is indeed indebted, as is witnessed in the historic influence of India over Asiatic and the most distant of European thought. Unless we have national self-respect, how is progress possible ? And this self-respect must express itself primarily in the individual. And then is a bit of glamour of the foreign culture to overpower us ? Are we to fall at the feet of an alien culture,

* See Swami Vivekananda's Biography, Vol. II, page 87.

simply because for the moment it is physically triumphant? As well stab one's own mother to the heart, as well spit upon one's aged father and revile him publicly, as to condemn things Indian for no other reason than because they are Indian. Are we to believe in others or in ourselves? Shall our growth be from without or from within? Imitation is death; originality alone is life."*

It will certainly be questioned by our objectors: Are we then in order to revert to our ancient ideals to fall back on our old civilization? Are we to give up living in magnificent hostels for thatched asylums in the forests as of old, and to resort to the homes of the Guru for education, instead of attending splendidly built colleges situated in the cities? Are we to resume the old system of begging from door to door for our food, living the life of an eleemosynary during the stage of studentship? Are we also to take to forest life like the old *Vanaprasthas*, instead of living in cities as useful members of society? In short, are we to give up the life of ease and comfort and of useful citizenship for the austere life of a wandering monk, without any fixed home or habitation? Of course if we could revert to our old methods without revolutionizing our present mode of living to which we have been addicted for centuries, then nothing could have been better for the attainment of our supreme ideal of spirituality. But this is not possible at present in the changed condition of the country and times. The object would, however, be, to a great extent, gained, if amidst the ruling passion for riches and comforts, a spirit of inward renunciation were to grow up, when the old ideals will not be found as difficult of attainment.

Spirituality was the ideal of the past India, in place of which there is now ruling in the very same country, the spirit of rank materialism and unbelief. The virtues that distinguish a man of spirituality most prominently are purity of heart, steadfastness in knowledge and Yoga, charity, control of the senses, reading of the scriptures,

* See Prabuddha Bharata, Vol. XVIII, No. 204.

austerity, uprightness, non-injuriousness, truth, absence of calumny, compassion to beings, non-covetousness, gentleness, modesty, absence of fickleness, forgiveness, fortitude, absence of hatred, absence of pride and illumination of the mind.* The opposite qualities are found in men who think that everything ends with the body and that there is no future state. The description given in the Gita of the qualities that are found in such men depicts a condition of mankind, which very closely resembles that observed in the present age. The Gita says :—

“There are two manifestations of beings in the world, *viz.*, the divine and the Asuric or demoniacal. Persons of demoniacal nature know not what to do and what to refrain from ; neither purity nor conduct, nor truthfulness is in them. They say : ‘The universe is without truth, without a moral basis, without a God, brought about by mutual union, with lust for its cause.’ Holding this view, these ruined souls of small intellect, of fierce deeds, rise as the enemies of the world for its dissolution. Filled with insatiable desires, possessed with ostentation, pride and arrogance, holding evil ideas through delusion, they work with impure resolve. Beset with immense cares ending only in death, regarding gratification of lusts as the highest and feeling sure that that is all. Bound by a hundred ties of hope, given over to lust and wrath, they strive to secure by unjust means hoards of wealth for sensual enjoyment. They say :—‘This to-day has been gained by me ; this desire I shall obtain ; this is mine ; and that wealth also shall be mine in future. That enemy has been slain by me, and others also shall I slay. I am lord, I enjoy, I am successful, powerful and happy. I am rich and well-born. Who else is equal to me ?’ Thus deluded by ignorance, bewildered by many a fancy, covered by the meshes of delusion, addicted to the gratification of the lust, they fall down into a foul hell. Self-conceited, haughty, filled with pride and the intoxication of wealth, they perform work for name and fame only. Possessed

* See Bhagwad Gita, Chapter XVI, 1—4.

of egoism, power, insolence and wealth, these malignant people hate Me (the Self within) in their own bodies and those of others."

Pleasure is one thing and happiness another. What is right and beneficial may not necessarily be pleasant. We may rightly seek happiness which means freedom from pain, if possible ; but in satisfying our thirst for more and more pleasures, we are at the same time adding to our already existing vast stock of misery which follows in their wake, the result of reaction. When we are suffering from pain, it is natural that we will endeavour to alleviate it in order to experience happiness ; but our efforts for enjoyment do not necessarily end in happiness. Wines may be very sweet to the palate, but the alcohol contained in them undermines the health ; and therefore, their use proves a fruitful source of misery only. Wines, therefore, though giving pleasure, cannot be said to cause happiness necessarily. When used medicinally, they may do good, but then they are not taken for pleasure's sake. True happiness lies not in the senses, but in the realisation of the Self ; and in this relative world also, happiness lies in what conduces to our well-being. So the Upanishadic saying as regards the distinction between what is sweet and pleasant and what is right and beneficial holds good here also.

Forgetting or not knowing what is true happiness or wherein lies true happiness, the deluded people seek happiness in sense objects, which is at first like nectar, but in the end is like poison. True happiness lies in renunciation, renunciation of all attachment to sense objects, even though this renunciation involves suffering or perhaps intolerable suffering. In fact to inure oneself to the habit of renunciation or suffering is the grand ideal of the East, the most sublime ideal of India. I propose to dwell on this subject at some length with the view of throwing some light on it, with due regard to the teachings of the Holy Scriptures, as well as the interpretations of the said texts by the two most celebrated and renowned Indian Tyagis or renouncers of the last and the present

centuries, *i.e.*, the reverend Swamis Vivekananda and Rama Tirtha whose eloquent and inspiring utterances have imparted to the subject that lucidity which renders it easily comprehensible by the people who are used to modern ways of thinking and who are mostly versed in the thought and philosophy of the West.

My countrymen! it is a great delusion to think that Indian ideals are all absurd or wrong, or if they are even reasonable or right, they are impracticable. They are precepts for the adornment of books only and can never be intended for actual application in our life. We too admit that an ideal is after all an ideal only, and that its complete application is beyond our human faculties. If it were possible to realise an ideal in the ordinary states, it will no longer remain an ideal, as an ideal is realised in the transcendental state only, if it is at all realisable. It cannot, however, be denied that ideals are necessary in order to maintain our moral status which would certainly be much deteriorated if there were no ideals before us, ever serving as incentives to endeavour for higher and higher developments, be they physical, moral, intellectual or spiritual. If it is not possible for us to act fully upon them, we must at least endeavour to be constantly acting up to them. For instance, to speak the truth is one of the ideals which no body can practice in ordinary life to its fullest extent. There are occasions when an untruth may prove a great boon in saving an individual or even a nation from destruction or heavy afflictions. But is it that for a few exceptions, the grand ideal of truth should be abandoned? Similarly, we must hold on to the ideal of disinterestedness or the sacrifice of all self-interests for the interests of others, in order to have less selfishness in the world, there being already enough of it. If we were to relinquish this ideal of disinterestedness, selfishness would increase tremendously, and there would be no exhibition of any fellow-feeling by man. We must likewise insist on the ideal of non-injury to living beings, in order that there be less destruction of life. It is true we cannot stop destruction of life totally as long as the strug-

gle for existence is raging. Destruction of life is inevitable, as even our bare maintenance is dependent upon it. Still the ideal of non-injury to living beings can never be set aside, to save at least wanton destruction of life ; and we must be constantly endeavouring to act up to it, in order that there be least destruction of life compatible with our existence. If ladies that are slaves of fashion were to place this grand ideal before them, they would no longer be guilty of permitting destruction of life for the sake of obtaining feathers of birds that decorate their bonnets.

Consequently, my countrymen ! our ancestors' ideals have great significance in them ; and woe to us ! that they have been and are being trampled regardless of all consequences, in utter ignorance of their real merits. If ye wish the good of your country, whether it be in the direction of spirituality or material improvement of your country, it is high time that ye must no longer ignore your ancestors' ideals, the real secrets of your nation's greatness in the past, the breach of which has resulted in the visitation upon the nation of the worst calamities that can fall upon mankind.



II. THE IDEAL OF WORK AND OF RENUNCIATION IN FAMILY LIFE.

One of the objections that are usually brought against *Vedanta* as a religion and philosophy is that it takes no regard of human sufferings ; for, as it is said, the principal aim and object of this system of philosophy and religion is that every one should strive for his own salvation regardless of what is happening in the world. He should retire to the forest and sit in seclusion for the sake of contemplation and meditation on his own Self (as the *Atman* is called). It is argued that when the *Atman* or the Absolute is said to be free from all attributes, such as benevolence, etc., virtues that distinguish most pre-eminently the nobility of the human species from the attributes found in the brute crea-

tion, there can be no exhibition of any fellow-feeling in men having such a belief. The *Vedantic* teachings are, therefore, calculated to produce a race of unsympathetic men, devoid of all fellow-feelings, a race of dreamers and visionaries only, bent on attempts to merge their selves into the Supreme Self, and thus produce a state of self-annihilation, the object of such dreamers being the utter extinction of all personality whether individual or universal, for which purpose they abandon the society of their fellow-men for a life of seclusion in the forests, regardless of all obligations upon them as a member of the human society. Such efforts, should, in the opinion of these objectors, be treated as acts of supreme selfishness rather than selflessness as is boastfully asserted by the advocates of this system of philosophy. All self-annihilation would have the effect of reducing what is sensed as a real existence to what may be called non-existence or nullity, which belief savours of an actual nihilism; for admitting that there is the existence of one Self, called *Atman* or *Brahman* or the Absolute Consciousness, into which all other selves that are apparent only, are finally merged, that Absolute Self or Consciousness is after all an infinite ocean of void only, considering that it is free from all attributes of personality and that there is no consciousness therein of any other existence external to it. So everybody's aim according to this system of philosophy and religion is to reduce himself to a state of non-entity. It is evident that in such a belief there can be no idea of any fellow-feeling, as the various personalities that are perceived by the senses as real and existing separately from one another, are considered as unreal having no individual existence whatsoever, their apparent reality perceived by the senses being regarded as due to the activity of the mind wherein alone there is their existence, if they at all exist. The world exists in the mind only and beyond it, it has no existence whatsoever in the absolute sense; or more correctly speaking, its phenomenal existence is the result of super-impositions of what are perceived by the senses over the actual one Reality which alone exists,

and which is called the *Atman*, *Brahman*, or the Absolute.

In short the above is the trend of reasoning adopted by the opponents of the *Vedanta* against its fundamental teachings ; and it is further ironically said that this is the grand ideal of the East—denial of all self-enjoyments, a life of recluses, a life that is merely dreamy or visionary, always thinking of the future state and not of the present which is truly real, as it is perceived by the senses, always meditating on the unrealities of the world and not on its realities that actually come into our experience.

On the other hand, it is said by the said critics, there is the ideal of the West wherein the things of the world being taken as absolutely real, are made the sources of enjoyment and comfort by man, and attempts are made to contribute to the happiness of mankind and the alleviation of their misery through diverse inventions and discoveries that have already conduced largely to the amelioration of their condition. This ideal takes full regard of the individual personalities of man, and thus there is the awakening in him of that fellow-feeling which has done so much towards the improvement of his condition. It holds an optimistic view of the world and of its doings, and ever takes regard of the possibility of still further progress and development of man's endeavours for greater and greater comfort, ending in the minimization of all misery in the world.

Now let us see how far is the above reasoning of our critics correct in the light of interpretations of the *Vedanta* by its greatest teachers both ancient and modern.

Swami Vivekananda in one of his discourses says as follows :—

“ I am grateful to the lands of the West for the many warm hearts that received me with all the love that pure and disinterested souls alone could give, but my life's allegiance is to this my mother land; and if I had a thousand lives, every moment of the whole series would be consecrated to your service, my countrymen, my friends !

“ And what a land ! whosoever stands on this sacred land, whether alien or a child of the soil, feels himself surrounded—unless his soul is degraded to the level of the brute animals,—by the living thoughts of the earth’s best and purest sons, who have been working to raise the animal to the divine through centuries, whose beginning history fails to trace. The very air is full of pulsations of spirituality. This land is sacred to philosophy, to ethics and spirituality, to all that tends to give a respite to man in his incessant struggles for the preservation of the animal, to all training that makes man throw off the garment of brutality and stand revealed as the spirit immortal, the birthless, the deathless, the ever blessed,—the land where the cup of pleasure was full, and fuller has been the cup of misery, until here, first of all man found out that it was all vanity ; here first of all, in the prime of youth, in the lap of luxury, in the height of glory and plenitude of power, he broke through the fetters of delusion. Here in this ocean of humanity, amidst the sharp interaction of strong currents of pleasure and pain, of strength and weakness, of wealth and poverty, of joy and sorrow, of smile and tear, of life and death, in the melting rhythm of eternal peace and calmness, arose the throne of renunciation ! Here in this land, the great problems of life and death, of the thirst for life, and the vain mad struggles to preserve it, only resulting in the accumulation of woes, were first grappled with and solved—solved as they were never before and never will be hereafter ; for here and here alone was discovered that even life itself is an evil, the shadow only of something which alone is real. This is the land where alone religion was practical and real, and here alone men and women plunged boldly in to realise the goal, just as in other lands, they madly plunge in to realise the pleasures of life by robbing their weaker brethren. Here and here alone the human heart expanded till it included not only the human, but birds, beasts and plants ; from the highest gods to grains of sand, the highest and the lowest all find a place in the heart of man, grown great and infinite. And here alone,

the human soul studied the universe as one unbroken unity whose every pulse was his own pulse.

“ And what a glorious destiny my brethren, for as far back as the days of the Upanishads, we have thrown the challenge to the world—‘ not by wealth, not by progeny, but by renunciation alone immortality is reached.’ Race after race has taken the challenge up and tried their utmost to solve the world’s riddle on the plane of desires. They have all failed in the past. We have solved our problem ages ago, and held on to it through good or evil fortune, and mean to hold on to it till the end of time. Our solution is unworldliness—renunciation.”

The above quotation from the Swami Vivekananda’s writings gives a death-blow to all the arguments of our critics against the *Vedanta*, but in order to explain the subject in detail, it is meet that we should examine it in the light thrown on it by the Holy Scriptures.

Indeed as stated by the Swami Vivekananda, the whole secret of India’s spiritual greatness lies in renunciation—renunciation of all regards for self, renunciation of all desires and finally renunciation of the fruits of actions. This renunciation has been defined in various lights by various authors and writers. To my mind, it resolves itself into the following chief factors :—

(a) Renunciation of all desires, producing the state of utter desirelessness. Strictly speaking, one should not seek even *moksha* or salvation. One may live an active life even without having the least desires for anything, his acts being guided by no particular motives except what flow in their natural course. Doing work without motive has apparently no meaning. But it should be understood that when work is done by a man who becomes one with God through Yoga or concentration and loses all idea of egoism, he can be said to be doing work without any particular motive or without any consideration of personal benefit.

(b) Renunciation of all desires that seek to serve self-interest only. Men may have desires for the advancement

of the good of others including his family and children.

(c) Renunciation of all actions, whether leading to his own good or the good of others. This may be taken as producing a state of utter inactivity, living men being reduced to the state of inert matter. This state is produced in men who have taken to severest asceticism, reducing their bodies to the condition of inanimate objects. Instances of austerities are recorded in the Hindu Scriptures wherein it is stated that birds made their nests in the bodies of those persons who had resorted to such practices.

(d) Renunciation of the fruits of actions. One may resort to action for his own good as well as the good of others, but should work without attachment to the fruits thereof. His business is to work and not to have an eye as to whether a particular work turns out barren or fruitful in the end, or whether he meets with success or failure. Thus he may have a motive for his work, but whether the motive is fulfilled or not is not his business to look to. In such cases success and failure are equal to him. This is attained in two ways :—(1) by surrendering all fruits of actions to God, depending on His grace only for success ; and (2) by becoming entirely indifferent as to what results are produced by his work, his business being merely to work in response to all obligations upon him.

A Hindu house-holder's life as described by Manu is a life of self-abnegation. A Hindu should not cook his food for himself or for his family alone. Hospitality is highly enjoined and guests are first of all to be fed. A Hindu and his wife are expected to partake of their food last of all, even after the domestic servants have been fed. In the changed condition of the times and country, renunciation as described above under (d) alone can be recommended for actual practice in this iron age.

It is asked why should not one seek his self-interest when it is necessary that the self should be first propitiated for its preservation. It may be alright to do good to others, but why so at the sacrifice of all interests of self. The

tendency of the present times is to sacrifice the interests of others for self-interest; and on the contrary, the tendency of the Indian past was the surrender of all regards for self for the benefit of others. This is the fight between the modern ideal of the Western people and the past ideal of India. As we cannot restore intact the old ideal of India which involves so much sacrifice of self-interest, we must find a solution that may satisfy both parties, and at the same time save men from a career of down-right ruin that must ensue from a life of reckless enjoyments and sense pleasures.

In the *Yoga Vasishtha* a story is related shewing how the celebrated Raja Janak obtained eternal wisdom and bliss by living the life of an active house-holder in the midst of perfect mental renunciation. The story is that the said king happened to visit one of his gardens one day, where he met a number of *Siddhas* or perfect men who were completely absorbed in contemplation on the *Atman*. He heard one of the *Siddhas* speaking aloud thus:—"One should give up all idea of the *seer*, the *seen* and the *vision*, destroying all *vasanas* or seeds of desire. That which shines even before vision and in the effulgence of which do all these three shine that *Atman* we are adoring." The next one then uttered the following words:—"One who relinquishes the Glorious One dwelling in the heart for an external duty is like that fool who possessing a precious diamond seeks to collect false stones." The third one then exclaimed:—"Whoever seeks fulfilment of desires or cherishes a hope, can never attain realization; and therefore, one who has given up all expectations or has become above desires, has, in truth, attained the goal."

Janak after hearing what the *Siddhas* said at once left the garden in a thoughtful mood and became highly dejected. On entering his palace he sought a corner where he seated himself on a seat completely absorbed in the current of thought that was stirred up in his mind by the speeches of the *Siddhas*. He remained quiet and calm for a long time, and when his attendants appeared before him

reminding him of the various duties he had to do at the fixed hours, he maintained a complete silence. After thinking for some time as to what course he should adopt in future in his relations with the external world, he came to the conclusion that all actions follow as the result of the activity of the mind only. The *Atman* or the spirit being changeless is neither the actor nor the enjoyer or sufferer. It is the reflection of the *Atman* in the mirror of the mind which is ordinarily always active ; or the ego, as it is technically called, is the actor and enjoyer or sufferer. When acts are done in the state of concentration of the mind, in which state it can be said to be practically at rest, there is no consciousness of the lower ego present. The consciousness that 'I am doing this and that' is never present when work is done through *Yoga* or concentration of mind. In such a state of mind, the doer though incessantly busy in work can be said to rank with the man who actually does not do any work. A man full of egoism, though not doing any work, is in truth a doer of work, while the man doing work in a state of complete concentration of the mind, wherein all sense of egoism is entirely effaced, is virtually a non-doer. So Janak said to himself:—
 "If I give up doing work or if I do work, both are the same to me, when I am free from egoism. In fact I will try to be completely free from attachment to the fruits of work. I will neither gain, nor lose anything, if I do work or give up doing work. I will enjoy what I have and shall not seek enjoyment of what I do not possess. If I work, I will not do it for any personal benefit or in order to obtain credit for it ; and if I do not work, I will not think that I am to blame for it, as long as I am doing work without any regard for praise or blame. Whether an act is praiseworthy or blameable, I will not do it for praise or will not abstain from doing it because it is blameable."

After pursuing such a trend of thought, the Raja Janak came to the resolution of living in the world engaged in all the pursuits of life. He was ever in the state of Supreme Bliss, and was free from all attachment to sense-objects,

while moving among them. The question of right and wrong never troubled his mind, as he had risen above it. He never felt any joy in success, nor sorrow in failure. His mind was buoyant alike in success or failure. His body appeared to be engaged in work, while his mind was ever at rest. He had no yearnings for the future, nor did he ever grieve over the past. He lived only in the present.

Janak's life presents a perfect model of complete renunciation while engaged fully in the pursuits of life—the life of a sovereign, of a ruler of mankind.

The statement that the question of right and wrong never troubled Janak's mind, as he had risen above it, will no doubt startle our modern moralists whose idea of morality is confined within our limited personality only. They are not aware that there is a transcendental state of man, wherein there is no consciousness at all of any relativity in which state only there is a sense of right and wrong or other pairs of opposites as they are called. Besides, when a work is done without attachment to its fruit or in the state of *Yoga*, i.e., concentration of mind, free from all egoism or the idea of actorness, there is no moral responsibility attached to the doer.

The ideal of work without attachment to the fruits thereof, breathing the real spirit of renunciation, is the grandest teaching both of the *Yoga Vasishtha* and the *Bhagwad Gita*, as instanced by the following quotations from the latter work :—

1. Thy right is to work only, O Arjuna ! but never to the fruits thereof. Be thou not the producer of the fruits of thy actions ; neither let thy attachment be towards inaction (i.e, thou shouldst neither lead the life of inactivity). II—47.

2. Being steadfast in *Yoga*, perform actions, abandoning attachment to them, remaining unconcerned as regards success and failure. II—48

3. Work with desire is verily ! far inferior to that performed without attachment to it. O Arjuna ! seek

refuge in this evenness of mind. Wretched are they who are for results. II—49.

4. He who is everywhere unattached, not pleased at receiving good, nor vexed at evil, is a wise man. II—57.

5. A self-controlled man moving among objects with senses under restraint and free from attraction and aversion attains to tranquillity. II—64.

6. Without performing work none reaches to the state of worklessness (*i.e.*, the state in which all actions are renounced that bind a man to the world or to the heaven); by merely giving up action no one attains to perfection. III—4.

7. Verily! none can ever rest for even an instant, without performing action; for all are made to act helplessly indeed, by the *Gunas* born of *Prakriti* (*i.e.*, under the influence of *Sanskaras* or seeds of work done by them in their previous births). III—5.

8. And the man who has controlled the senses by the mind and is unattached, and then directs his organs of action to the path of work excels. III—7.

9. Do thou perform obligatory works, O Arjuna! for action is superior to inaction, as even the bare maintenance of the body would not be possible, if thou art inactive. III—8.

10. As do the unwise attached to work, act, so should the wise act without attachment, desirous for the guidance of the world (*i.e.*, with the object of setting an example for doing work to all people who may otherwise relapse into lethargy). III—25.

11. He who sees inaction in action, and action in inaction, is intelligent among men; he is a *Yogi* and a doer of all action. IV. 20.

Commentary—An action is an action, as long as the idea of actorship of the self holds good. Directly the idea of actorship disappears, no matter what or how much is done, action has lost its nature. It can no longer bind. On the contrary, how much so ever inactive an ignorant person may remain, so long as there is the idea of actorship in him, he is constantly doing action.

12. Forsaking attachment to the fruits of action, ever steadfast and depending on nothing, a man though engaged in action does not do anything. IV—20.

13. Both renunciation of action and performance of action (without attachment to the fruits thereof) lead to freedom; of these the way of performance of action is superior to the way of renunciation of action (in the case of a man who has not attained *Jnana* or knowledge of Self). V—2.

14. He should be known a constant Sanyasin who (while engaged in action) neither likes nor dislikes; for free from the pairs of opposites, he is easily set free from bondage, V—3.

15. Renunciation of action (unaccompanied by *Jnana* or knowledge of Self) is hard to attain to without performance of work (with freedom from attachment to the fruits thereof); the man of meditation purified by devotion to such actions quickly attains salvation. V—6.

16. With the mind purified by devotion to the performance of such actions, the body conquered and the senses subdued, one who realises his self as the Self in all beings, though acting is not tainted (by the effects of his actions). V—7.

17. He who performs his bounden duties without leaning to the fruits of action, is a renouncer of action as well as a devotee to action, not he who is without fire, nor he who is without action. VI—I.

Commentary.—A man without fire is that who has renounced actions enjoined by the Veda, requiring fire as adjunct, e.g., *Agnihotra*.

A man without action is one who has renounced actions which do not require fire as adjunct, such as austerities and meritorious acts like digging of wells, etc.

18. Know that to be devotion to action which is called renunciation, for none becomes a devotee to action without forsaking *Sankalpa* (i.e., no one can be a *Karma Yogi* who is planning always and wishing for results) VI. 2.

Then in the eighteenth chapter of the Gita, Sri Krishnā says as follows :—

“ Some philosophers declare that all action should be relinquished as an evil, whilst others say that the work of *Yajna*, gift and austerity should not be relinquished. My opinion is that work of *Yajna*, gift and austerity should not be relinquished, but it should indeed be performed, for it is purifying to the wise. Even these works, however, should be performed without clinging to the fruits thereof. Renunciation of obligatory actions is not proper, and he who from fear of bodily trouble relinquishes action because it is painful, obtains not the fruit (*i.e.*, the *moksha* or salvation which is attained by the renunciation of all action accompanied with the knowledge of the Self). Actions cannot be entirely relinquished by an embodied being, but he who relinquishes attachment to the fruits of actions, is called a relinquisher in the true sense, and such a relinquisher hates not a disagreeable work nor is he attached to an agreeable one.”

Be it noted here that the *Yajnas* enjoined in the Gita as obligatory duties are not the *Yajnas* or sacrifices attended with offerings of animals, etc., nor is the austerity mentioned therein the asceticism practiced by deluded men for obtaining *Siddhis* or supernatural powers, which is condemned by the Lord in unsparing terms. The *Yajnas* meant here consist of the duties of man towards God, the Devas, the Rishis, the ancestors, fellow human beings and lower animals. The *tapas* or austerity as illustrated in the Gita is of three kinds :—

(1) Worship of the Devas, the twice born (Brahmans), the Guru (preceptor) and the wise, purity, straight-forwardness, continence and non-injuriousness constitute what is called the austerity of the body.

(2) Speech which causes no vexation to anybody, and is true, as also agreeable and beneficial, regular study of the Vedas—these are said to form the austerity of speech.

(3) Serenity of mind, kindness, silence, self-control, honesty of motive, these are called the austerity of the mind.

This threefold austerity practiced by steadfast men, with great sincerity, and without attachment to fruits, is said to be of the highest kind.

An action done without attachment to the fruits thereof does not necessarily imply that no regard should be had of the consequences that may follow the commission of a particular act. It is distinctly laid down in the Gita (Chap. XVIII-25) that an action should be considered as *Tamasic* or inferior which is undertaken through delusion, without heed to the consequences, loss (of power or wealth), injury (to others) and one's own ability.

Notwithstanding that actions done with attachment to the fruits thereof bind a man to the world, Sri Krishna emphatically denounces men shirking their duties, for He says :—"One should not relinquish, O son of Kunti! the duty to which he is born, though it is attended with evil, for all undertakings are enveloped by evil as fire by smoke." By evil here is meant bondage of matter which lasts as long as one is living in the realm of the *Gunas*, *i.e.*, does not attain realisation of the Self. A man, therefore, who does not strive for Self-realisation is bound to do his duty.

In short exertion (*purushartha*) is the theme both of the *Yoga-Vasishtha* and the *Bhagwad-Gita*. Retirement to the forests is not necessarily advocated, if one is able to live in the world with perfect mental renunciation. Sri Rama and Arjuna both were desirous of taking to forest life, the former being disgusted with the world, and the latter being afraid of his enemies ; and both were taught by their respective teachers to continue the active life of a householder amidst perfect *Vairagya* or mental renunciation. True *Vairagya* is explained to consist in living a life of activity without attachment to the fruits of actions, taking the worldly things at the same time as having no reality.

Sri Krishna's final advice to Arjuna is to take refuge in Him abandoning the fruits of actions that may be done by him, for He says :—"If thou art unable to meditate upon Me or to practice *Abhyasa Yoga* (*i.e.*, gradual withdrawal of the mind from the objects to which it wanders),

then thou shouldst take refuge in Me by doing actions for My sake, and if thou art unable to do this even, then thou shouldst abandon the fruits of actions, for, indeed, knowledge is better than (blind) *Abhyasa Yoga*, meditation (with knowledge) is more esteemed than (mere) knowledge, *i.e.*, *Jnana* wherein there is no realisation of the Self, and renunciation of the fruits of actions (while fully engaged in actions) is better than meditation (See Gita, Chap. XII-8 to 12).

Meditation and active work may be reconciled if one realises the truth that underlies both meditation and real work. In an article published in the *Prabuddha Bharata*, the following passage occurs which is interesting as well as instructive* :—

“It may be suggested here by some that meditation and inaction are synonymous terms. We have heard this plenitude before. And we reply that it has been this very idea which has been the bane of India. Let it always be remembered that the very highest form of meditation *implies* the very highest activity. To meditate truly is to make the mind most efficiently active, in very fact, to draw out all its powers and potentialities. And what indeed is work, if not active meditation. As in meditation the whole mind is concentrated, so in work *the whole man* (*i.e.*, the body and the mind both) is concentrated ; and this concentrated force expresses itself though not only his mind, but his very hands and feet and all the faculties of sense and heart.”

Then again we quote from the same Journal :—“There is an active as well as a contemplative side to the religious life. Here in India for countless generations have we had, side by side, the two paths of *Jnana* and *Karma Yoga*. Both, it is recognised by the sages, lead to the very same results. Work is, in itself, a form of meditation. For in work the faculties of the mind are disengaged from a purely speculative functioning and brought to bear in all their potential energy and scope of expression upon the task in hand. In

* See Vol. XVIII, No. 204.

this respect the mind develops undreamed of concentration and a great positiveness and decision ; and therefore, according to the ideal of work, can work itself become an easy and sure method for the highest personal development and spiritual realisation (provided it is done in the true spirit as preached by the Divine Author of the Gita). The spirit of service is, therefore, a means of salvation. In doing service to mankind, a sense of expansion is born, in which the personal merges in the larger self of the humanity in general as a whole, and thus it leads the way to the realisation of the ideal of selflessness. And this is the goal to which the path of service leads—the seeing of the One in the many, the development of the true *Vedanta* character and eventually the *Vedanta* realisation.”

The above-mentioned teachings of the Gita as regards the secret of work, which alone can save men from the bondage of matter, will no doubt appear strange or rather irreconcilable to reason to most people, specially to those who have no idea what that bondage of matter is, and how does it enthrall the spirit, retarding the evolution of a soul under its thralldom from lower to higher states. The Swami Rama Tirtha has, however, treated this subject in a way giving it, as it were, the garb of modern thought, and has clothed it in modern phraseology, thus rendering it easily comprehensible by those men also who are not used to the study of Hindu metaphysics. We beg leave, therefore, to quote below rather extensively from his writings and speeches. He says in one of his American lectures :—

“ There is a great misunderstanding about the word renunciation. Renunciation does not require you to go to the deepest forest of the Himalayas ; renunciation does not demand of you to strip yourself of all clothing ; renunciation does not require you to walk barefoot and bare-headed. This is not renunciation. Some people say that *Vedanta* teaches idleness, laziness. It is not so. Rama brings you no perverted *Vedanta* ; but the real *Vedanta* from the fountain head of nature. Apply your logic and bring

your reason to bear upon the subject, and you will see how wonderful *Vedanta* is, and how it leads us to success in every department. It is an open secret that work, attack, persistent application is the secret of success. Hammer on ! hammer on is the first principle of success. Without work you can never succeed. Here presents a question most commonly raised against *Vedanta*. How can you reconcile continuous labour with the unaffected impersonal pure nature of Self, *Atman*, as demonstrated by *Vedanta*. Does not *Vedanta* lead to laziness and inaction by including the realisation of rest and peace of Divine Self and by preaching renunciation ? The objection is due to a terrible misunderstanding of the nature of work or renunciation. What is work ? Intense work, according to *Vedanta*, is rest. Here is a paradoxical statement, a startling statement 'work is rest.' All true work is rest, that is what *Vedanta* preaches. The greatest worker when he is at the height of his work, when he is doing his best, mark him, in the eyes of others, he is engaged in strenuous efforts, but examine him from his own standpoint, he is no doer. The hero in war, say Napoleon or Washington or anybody, when he is fighting, doing his best, look at him. The body works automatically, as it were, the mind is absorbed in the work to such a degree that the idea of " I am working " is entirely gone, the small enjoying ego is absolutely lost, the credit seeking little self is absent. This incessant work unwittingly leads you to the highest *Yoga*. Ask anybody who has had the experience of solving difficult problems in mathematics, and he will tell you that only *then* are problems solved and difficulties removed, when the idea 'I am doing this' is entirely absent; and the more a man can rise above the little ego or the lower self, the more glorious work comes out of him. Thus does the *Vedanta* teach rising above the little ego by dint of earnest work and losing everything in the real indescribable principle which according to the *Vedanta* is the real Self, *Atman* or God. When a thinker, philosopher, poet, scientist or any worker attunes himself to a state of abstraction,

and rises to the heights of resignation to such a degree that no trace of personality is left in him, and *Vedanta* is practically realised, then and then only does God, the Master Musician, take up in His own hands, the organ or instrument of the body and the mind, and sends forth grand vibrations, sweet notes, exquisite symphonies out of him. Thus all success flows from *Vedanta* unknowingly put into practice. All work is nothing else but making your body and mind illusions, practically nothing from the standpoint of your own consciousness. Rise above them and that is work. According to *Vedanta* the body is not yourself and the mind is not yourself. Your true Self is something beyond both these two. Incessant work, incessant labour is the greatest *Yoga* for a man of the world. You are the greatest worker to the world when to yourself you are no worker. The more you deny your unreal apparent self, the better your work will be. In order that your work should be successful, you should not mind the end, you should not care for the consequences or the results. Let the mind be at rest and the body be continuously at work. It is our selfish restlessness that spoils all work. Then work is best done when it is performed in a true spirit of self-sacrifice. Everybody loves white objects. Let us examine the cause of their being the object of universal love. Let us account for the success of the white and also see why black objects are everywhere hated. Physics tells us the reality of the phenomenon of colour. Red is not red, green is not green, black is not black, and all is not what seems. The red rose gets its lovely colour by reflecting or throwing back that colour. The other colours in the sun's rays are entirely absorbed by the rose, and no body attributes those colours to the rose. The green leaf absorbs all other colours in light and appears fresh and green by the very colour which it denies to itself and throws back. The black objects have the property of absorbing all colours and reflecting no light. They have no spirit of sacrifice in them and no charity. They do not renounce even a single ray. Their nature tells you

that black, black like coal shall he appear who refuses to give unto his neighbours what he receives. The way to receive is to give. The secret of appearing white is total renunciation, to throw back instantaneously on your neighbours all what you receive. Acquire the virtue of white objects and you must be successful. Imbibe, therefore, the spirit of sacrifice and reflect unto others what you receive. Have no recourse to selfish absorption so that you may not appear black, black-hearted."

Retiring to the forests is simply a means to an end. It is like going to the university. In the university we acquire knowledge, but it is never understood that we should remain there for ever and ever. Similarly to acquire this knowledge of the Self which is the highest and the only true knowledge, one may retire to the forest for a while, but the *Vedanta* philosophy never teaches that retiring into a forest is renunciation. Renunciation has nothing to do with anybody's position or bodily work. Renunciation simply places one at his best, places him on his vantage ground. Renunciation simply enhances one's powers, multiplies his energies, strengthens his force and makes a God of a man. It takes away all sorrow, all anxiety and fear. One becomes fearless and happy through renunciation alone. How can a married man realise this renunciation asks the Swami whom we have quoted extensively above? In reply he says :—

"If you wish to remove the cause that retards your spiritual progress, you will have to mend matters at home. Every wife will have to become the saviour of her husband, and every husband will have to become the saviour of his wife. People say :—"Oh ! I love you, I love you devotedly." What humbug ! If you really love your wife or husband, you ought to be able to sacrifice something for her or him ; but do you ? The wife wants to possess the husband, and the husband wants the wife to be dependent on him. If you really love each other, you ought to try to advance each other's good. But do you really do that ? Not at all. Had that been the case, then all families would

have happiness. But why are they not happy? Because they do not know how to advance each other's happiness. They think that if they gratify each other's sensual pleasures or help in each other's comforts, that is all happiness. Now how is the wife to become the saviour of the husband? She saves him from some temptations, outside contaminations. That is good and well as far as it goes. But she herself ought not to enslave him, by making demands upon him for more and more luxurious living beyond the means of her husband, the execution of which only entangles him in difficulties and distracts his thoughts that would have otherwise been directed towards his spiritual welfare. The husband too should not make her a dependent upon him entirely, without any freedom of action as regards her own spiritual progress. The solution of the difficulty is that when you love your wife, you think that you are loving God within her; and also make her love God within you. Each party should make self-sacrifice for the sake of each other's spiritual welfare, and should not try to entangle each other in greater and greater bondage by pandering to each other's desires."

Attachment to objects that gratify the senses is the source of all misery in the world. Family life proves a curse, when one gets attached to its enchantments and regards sense-enjoyments alone as true. In family life too one should live in perfect renunciation, being a mere witness instead of being entangled in it. Says the Swami—

"There was seen at one place a very beautiful picture. In that portrait or picture there was a magnificent couch. Upon that couch there were splendid cushions and pillows. A lovely queen was lying upon the couch. She was sick and on the point of death. The king and the children surrounded her all shedding tears. It was a beautiful picture. Every body would like to possess such a picture. It was so beautiful. But would any body like to be that lady. Very rich she was, but she was about to die. And would any body like to be that weeping husband or those children. Of course not. *Vedanta* requires you to live in

your families, to live in your homes as a witness only, not attached, in no way mixed up or entangled. Keep your mind always at rest, always unattached, keep your heart and mind always fixed upon divinity within, and look at all the household matters just as you would look at that picture. You know that when you look upon it as a spectator or a witness, it is a source of enjoyment ; but when you get entangled in it, it is a source of misery. If we get entangled in the phenomena of the world, we are in a sad plight. When we look at it as a witness, we enjoy it, it is so lovely to us."

The next principle of success in life is love wherein also the presence of a true spirit of renunciation is essential without which there can be no true love. What does love mean ? Love means practically realising by one his oneness and identity with his neighbours, with all others who come in contact with him. In order that a man may succeed, he should not look upon himself as separate or distinct from the self of the whole world ; but on the contrary, he must as far as possible sacrifice his self-interest even for the interests of others. Says the Swami :—

" So long as you are in perfect harmony with nature, so long as your mind is in tune with the universe, and you are feeling and realising your oneness with each and all, everything will be in your favour. The very moment you are at discord with the All, that very moment your friends and relatives will turn against you and you will be in a miserable plight."

Purity of heart is the most essential element in success. The Swami goes on to say :—

" It is true that thought is another name for fate ; what a man thinks that he becomes. If you begin to think impure thoughts and harbour debasing immorality, with the fulfilment of your selfish wishes, heart-breaking affliction and distracting sorrow shall be forced upon you in the bargain. The fool thinks he enjoys sensuous pleasures, but knows not that in an impure thought or deed, his very vitality is bought, sold and consumed."

True purity of heart results when there is a thorough mental renunciation of all desires. A life of purity can be led by that man only who has observed *Brahmacharya* (celebacy or continence as the case may be) in his early life. Breaking of this *Brahmacharya* is attended with severe penalties both physical and moral. Unless a man observes strictly the life of celebacy or continence, he cannot aspire to any spiritual progress. Purity of thought, word and deed is, therefore, of the highest importance for the development of character in a student as well as a householder, and the ancients paid particular attention to this to the exclusion of all other considerations. For this reason only a life of strict discipline was imposed on every man, be he a student, a householder, an anchorite or a wandering monk. The austere mode of living kept him constantly awakened to the thought that his goal was not the enjoyment of pleasures, but that of spiritual realisation. Says the Swami Rama Tirtha :—

“Do any kind of wrong, do any mischief, harbour in your mind any kind of wrong, do commit wrong deeds or sins at a place where you are sure no body will catch you or find you out. Sow the seed of evil wherever you please, even in a place as secure as any fort could be, sow the seed, and you will reap its fruit. You must be visited by pain and suffering. People take it as a moral law and say that there is not the same strength in it as there is in mathematical laws ; they say that there is no mathematical certainty about it. Mistaken they are who think that way. In the most solitary cave commit a sin and the very walls will bear testimony against you. You cannot cheat nature Providence. This is a truth, this is a law. We commit sins only in the heart, and we find ourselves in the outside world, surrounded by embarrassing and harrassing circumstances ; in difficulties, in all sorts of straits. We find this is the case ; but those who are ignorant of the real cause, blame circumstances and fight with their relatives and neighbours. The law is you must be pure. Harbour impurity and you must suffer the consequences.”

The purity of mind advocated by the Swami is hard to attain, until a man is brave enough to give up all desires, until he takes to the life of a mental renunciation, wherein no selfish thought of personal aggrandizement at the expense of one's neighbours is allowed to grow and prosper. Whose mind is already tainted, for him it is at the same time very necessary to habituate himself to a life of suffering, in order to cleanse his heart of all dross of sin that has attached to his soul. This subject is, however, treated in detail in the next chapter.



III.—THE IDEAL OF SUFFERINGS LEADING TO UNENDING BLISS.

The Lord Buddha said :—"Life is suffering " ; and therefore, in his creed, extinction of all life means *Nirvana* or salvation. By *Nirvana* is meant absolute annihilation. *Vedanta* also inculcates the same doctrine, regarding every state of life as suffering wherein there is no realisation of the Eternal Bliss. In spite of the fact that sufferings are our daily, nay even momentary experiences, *Vedanta* holds out the ideal of an actually ever-existing Absolute Bliss, denying the existence of all evil or suffering in the absolute sense. If any suffering is at all experienced, it is due to our ignorance regarding the existence of the Absolute Bliss or to our having not realised it owing to our attachment to the illusory sense-objects that constantly keep us enthralled. This attachment to sense-objects gives rise to pleasure and pain both, according to the use we make of it. If we make a proper use of it, we get pleasure, and if improper, it gives us pain. No doubt love for any body is a blessing ; and if there were no love, every mother would cast away her child ; but the same love becomes a curse, when it is changed into attachment which often times proves a source of immense misery. On the one hand either the child is spoilt, ending ultimately in his or her ruin ; or on the other, the blow to the mother is the more heavier, the greater is her attachment to him or her in case the child dies. So there is neither absolute pain nor absolute pleasure in this world of relativity. There is, therefore, no absolute pleasure in the sense-objects, yielding us the sense of happiness only. "The Vedanta system begins with tremendous pessimism," says the Swami Vivekananda, "and ends with real optimism. We deny the sense optimism, but assert the real optimism of the supersensuous. The real happiness is not in the senses, but above the senses; and it is in every man. The sort of optimism which we see in the world is what will

lead to ruin through the senses.” There is a beautiful Sanskrit poem in which a sage says to himself :—“ Why weepest thou my friend ? There is no fear of death for thee. Why weepest thou ? There is no misery for thee ; for thou art like the infinite blue sky, unchangeable in thy nature. Clouds of all colours come before it, play for a moment, and pass away ; it is the same sky. Thou hast only to drive away the clouds.”

As already stated in my previous work, “ The Mystery of God and the Universe,” *Vedanta* does not recognize sin in man, as inherent in his nature. Man is essentially a pure and perfect being. Whatever imperfection or impurity there is in man, is due to a thick covering of illusion that has made him regard himself as an impure or a sinful being. This illusion has apparently enveloped the glory and darkened the purity of the soul which is, however, not tainted by any such covering. One has to take off or remove this external covering, this thick veil of ignorance in order to realise that he is a pure being. The idea that he is a sinner, that he is an impure being, in fact, this dread of sin, is the source of all evil and misery in the world. If we prefer to be deluded into the idea that we have fallen, then we are certainly sinners, and have to suffer for our sins, our fall being of course due to our forgetting our true nature ; and in that case our *Vasanas* or impure mental desires alone are to blame.

So ignorance about our true nature is the real cause of our misery or sufferings. Says the Swami Rama Tirtha :—

“ This ignorance is darkness. If you go into a very dark room, you are certain to strike against a chair or a table or injure yourself in some other way. If the tables or the chairs were removed to some other place in the house, then too there is a likelihood of breaking your knee or head against any other thing, say against the wall, as long as there is darkness in the room. It cannot be helped. The remedy lies in lighting the room. If you simply light the room, let the things be where they are, you will not have to bother, you will then be able to walk unhurt from place to

place. So it is in this world. In order that your sufferings may be remedied, you should not rely on the adjustment of your surroundings in your position in life, but should depend on the remedy which consists in the lighting of your inner self, *i.e.*, upon the removing of your inner darkness."

Then again the Swami says:—"The first coming of pleasure shows us that it comes always when we get ourselves associated with or absorbed in the Divinity within, or when we get ourselves in harmony with the universe. The phenomenon of pain tells us that it always succeeds or follows the clinging or attachment to the material, the illusory sense-objects. Therefore, pain tells us that material objects are not real, and we need not waste our time or energies on outside worldly forms."

But the material objects are regarded as real; and therefore, the pain that is experienced on account of our attachment to them and which is a bitter experience of our every day life, must also be regarded as quite real, as long as what is called Absolute Bliss is not realised. Now let us examine into the nature and the causes of our sufferings, and see how far we are ourselves to blame for having brought them upon us.

Apart from afflictions due to super-human causes, *i.e.*, the catastrophes of nature, such as plague, famine or earthquake, or due to the actions of our neighbours, be they human beings or animals, such as troubles arising from the dog or the snake bite, theft or robbery, or similar other causes, most of our sufferings are visited on us as a consequence of our impure mental tendencies, having their roots in the seeds of desires and other evil inclinations of our past or present life, which fructify at one time or the other, and produce in us an unquenchable thirst for enjoyments, or a habit of picking up quarrels with our neighbours, ending in all sorts of troubles for us in the shape of bodily diseases, hurts and the like.

We have already stated in the previous chapter of this work that most of our sufferings arise as the result of

our impure thoughts, impure words and impure deeds. That even impure thoughts lead to our ruin whether spiritual, moral or physical, is the author's bitterest experience whose character though has not been otherwise so blamable. Our cares and our anxieties that make a prey of our heart and that sometimes prove quite unbearable afflictions, have for their causes those evil thoughts which unconsciously or consciously arise in our minds and in which we take pleasure to indulge, utterly regardless of all consequences. These very evil thoughts redound upon us sometimes in the shape of actual sorrowful events which to our minds appear as direct causes of the said mental cares and anxieties, and sometimes in the shape of false alarms, causing immense anxiety to us, notwithstanding that the said false alarms had no foundation whatsoever.

All impure thoughts arise from the fructification of the past *sanskaras* or seeds of our impure acts or desires of previous births. Like a perennial stream of water gushing out from its source, these impure thoughts gush out, as it were, from their sources in the *chit* element of our minds ; and they are at times quite uncontrollable, as stated by Sri Krishna in the Gita, wherein it is said :—

“ Even a wise man acts in accordance with his nature, what can restraint do.” (The evil or good nature of a man is due to his past good or bad associations.)

“ Attachment of the senses to their objects is natural. But let none come under its sway. It is his foe.”

The outcome of a man's impure *vasanas* or mental desires is that there is produced in him a habit of constantly thinking of sense-pleasures, though he may not actually be able to enjoy them. So Sri Krishna says that by constant thoughts of sense-pleasures, attachment to them is produced in a man. Attachment engenders a longing for the satisfaction of desires, which in its turn very often leads to vexations due to non-fulfilment of desires, ending in the confusion of his judgment, which casts a veil over the lessons of wisdom learnt by past experience. Thus deprived of his moral standard, he is prevented from using

his sense of discrimination between right and wrong and finally falling a prey to the impulses of passion, he paves the way to moral death. Thus Sri Krishna traces the degradation of a man whether it be spiritual, moral or physical to those first breaths of impure thoughts that come softly and almost unconsciously to the mind.

The worst enemy of man in this respect is his sexual instinct to which he succumbs rather immoderately. This sexual instinct in all living beings is nature's provision for the reproduction and multiplication of the species, but strangely enough it is made by man a source of pleasure, ending ultimately in his fall from the lofty standard of spirituality. Says the Swami Rama Tirtha :—

“Animals are so reasonable in their behaviour in this respect that if man also behaved in such a manner, all the lust and passion of the civilized society would be at an end. Wonder of wonders ! what a terrible blunder is made by man in calling a licentious man an animal, whereas animals are least licentious compared with man. They have no trace of any unreasonable passion and their sexual instinct is brought into action only for reproduction's sake. It is not so with man. A man who is sober and tranquil lives more the animal's life than a licentious man. A licentious man should not be called an animal. He is a civilized man. This is peculiar to civilized and not to the savage society.”

In illustration of what the Swami has said, we may refer to the diary of a celebrated traveller who while observing on the customs of a savage tribe in the East Africa, has noted it as a significant fact that the women of the tribe after becoming *enciente* live apart from their husbands until the child born is reared up. Strangely enough this peculiar trait of these savage women has been characterized by the said traveller as one partaking of animals' habits.

The ancient Rishis of India have provided very salutary checks upon man's passions and carnal desires by imposing such restrictions as compelled him to live a life of restraint and continence, even in the married state, with

the result that men in ancient India lived a highly spiritual and moral life.

Besides, there are other sufferings which man has himself courted by adopting a luxurious mode of living ending in pain, the result of reaction, or which he has himself created by his thirst for inventions or discoveries which though even real blessings, oftentimes prove curses in the end, either on account of his reckless and improper use of them, or on account of competition that grows up and ends in misery for a particular class or classes of mankind. The modern age boasts of having conquered all misery by inventing machines that help us to minimize all sufferings. But what is the value of all these machines, when the problem of want is not solved? Competition gets keener and keener, and ends in greater and greater misery, numerous hands being thrown out of work, devoid of all means of subsistence, owing to the failure of industrial concerns. It is not that we should not benefit from our inventions and appliances that have contributed so much to our comforts. Man has been resorting to all sorts of appliances since he has entered the civilized state; and therefore, an invention that renders valuable help in mitigating any particular human suffering, must be regarded as a blessing, provided it does not cause any general injury to living beings. But there have been in recent times some such inventions as are by reason of costliness or the nature of the thing invented, meant to benefit a particular class of men only, causing positive harm or injury to the interests of others; and therefore, if they are regarded as blessings by those men who are benefited by them, they are equally considered as curses by those people whose vital interests are injuriously touched by the said inventions. Consequently, the utilitarian doctrine of doing the greatest good to the greatest number of men, which is true in the plane of relativity only, and not in the spiritual plane wherein no injury to any being is permissible, must be taken as a criterion in deciding as to whether it is advisable or not to adopt a particular invention. Having regard to this principle, and

to avoid causing misery, as much as possible, it is desirable that all such inventions as are beneficial to a particular class of men only, at the risk of the interests of a majority of people, as well as those that are mostly incentive to the increase of the brutal element in man by gratifying his sensual pleasures or greed, ending ultimately in augmenting the keenness of his sufferings, should be discouraged as far as possible. At the same time in our zeal for inventions we should not bid adieu to the exercise of our intelligence and to the use of our bodily organs, those precious gifts of nature, by subordinating them entirely to mere mechanical instruments invented by us. It is a law that the power of ingenuity in a man is developed at the expense of his intelligence ; and the more a man is beholden to instruments for determining facts, the less there is the exercise of judgment or intelligence by him ; and therefore, if the present speed of inventions continues unabated, there are grave fears of the civilized men reverting to the savage state, bereft of all power of intelligence.

So we are ourselves responsible for many a suffering which we have courted by our luxurious mode of living, or by our having recourse to the use of machines and instruments rather more largely than is necessary. The *Vedantic* ideal is that we should habituate ourselves to a mode of living wherein if we get comforts, we should not feel happy for it, or if we experience pain, we should not be troubled by it. We must accustom ourselves to a life of endurance of sufferings. So India says :—" Suffer, show your power by suffering." The West says :— " Do show your power by doing, as we Westerners minimize our sufferings by conquering them." India says :—" We destroy evil or misery by suffering until evil is nothing to us, but becomes positive enjoyment. Your boast of your triumph over evil does not hold good, as evil or misery instead of being minimized or even decreased to any appreciable extent, is found as increasing, on the contrary, in a geometrical progression to the plans and remedies devised by you for suppressing it."

It is for this reason that a Hindu voluntarily submits to a life of self imposed sufferings, and resorts to an austere mode of living, such as, keeping fasts, rising and bathing early for prayers, attending to the wants and sufferings of fellow-beings in order to afford them relief, and similar other austerities intended for the restraint of senses and the control of passions, all of which ultimately lead to the realisation of Eternal Bliss. It is true that every body seeks pleasure and happiness unmixed with pain, and no body courts suffering willingly, and this is natural ; but the Hindu wishing to live a spiritual life, resists nature and tries to act against it. The western mind may think all this impracticable, but to the people of India, it is intensely practicable. From the earliest times there have been persons who have given up all comforts and luxuries to live in caves, and hundreds have given up their homes to weep bitter tears of misery on the banks of the sacred rivers, in order to realise this idea that there is an Eternal Bliss which can be gained by every body striving for it, no matter whatever bitter troubles and pains are undergone for its sake. To the western mind this must seem most visionary ; but nevertheless the idea exists and exists very strongly in the mind of the Hindu. Compared to Eternal life, this life or even a series of lives is but momentary, whether you have the poverty of the poorest man in rags or the wealth of the richest living person. Life is but momentary whether you have the best of health or the worst. There is but one solution of life, says the Hindu, and that solution is what they call Eternal Bliss which is to be obtained at any cost. If this be true, life becomes explained, life becomes bearable, becomes enjoyable ; otherwise life is but a useless burden.

All our sufferings whether due to impure tendencies of our minds or whether the consequences of the reaction of our luxurious mode of life, must no doubt be held as curses only, if they do not teach us lessons of wisdom, directing and guiding us to a life of righteousness or frugality. Indeed what we regard as calamities and heavy

afflictions may in the end turn out as blessings and do us some ultimate good, but for this it is essential that there springs up in our minds a sincere repentance for our past sins and evil deeds.

The blows dealt by a sorrow or calamity are calculated to cleanse the dross of sin or impurities that gets attached to the soul in the ordinary pursuits of life. In order to remove the husk from the paddy, strokes of the pestle are necessary ; and unless the ears of grain are thrashed, we cannot obtain it free from chaff. Similarly, the unbearable pain caused by an abscess is relieved only after it has been opened by a lancet which deals its strokes unmercifully, but which alone is the cause of subsequent relief of pain or of happiness that ensues after an operation is over or the abscess is cured. A Hindu understands well that the impurities of the heart are great hindrances in the way of realisation. He, therefore, resorts to all sorts of austerities in all the stages of his life, as a student, as a house-holder, as an anchorite and as a wandering monk, in order to maintain the purity of heart. He is, therefore, enjoined to be constantly practicing *Yoga* or performing *Yajnas* or sacrifices, involving all sorts of physical pain and trouble, with the view of keeping his heart untainted. He is fully conscious of the fact that any neglect or remissness on his part in this direction would only retard his spiritual progress ; and therefore, he is very careful to be constantly conforming to Shastric injunctions in this respect. People laugh at the scruples of a Hindu in matters of food, and at the daily observances by him of rites and ceremonies that in their eyes appear meaningless, but that have in fact a great influence on his future character of life. The effect of these apparently meaningless practices is that while the sufferings endured by him lead to the purification of his heart, his mind is freed, at least for the time being, from all impure thoughts, owing to his being constantly engaged in one or the other act of austerity. But for all this the presence of a thorough earnestness or sincerity is essential, without which all is a

farce or a play thing only. A Hindu thus prefers undergoing all sorts of pains and troubles for his spiritual welfare ; and his motto, therefore, is to court pain first and then enjoy Eternal Happiness afterwards, while the motto of the Western people is to have enjoyments at any cost, though they may end in permanent pain or misery. The Western people relying on their inventions and discoveries wish to taste enjoyments only, in the belief that with the help of their numerous inventions and remedies, they will be able to counteract the effects of the reaction that follows as a matter of fact in pursuance of the law that every action has a reaction equal and opposite. Consequently, they fall a prey to temptations, forgetful of the fact that human remedies are after all human, and do not always prove efficacious in alleviating misery or pain. They are never crossed by the thought that there is an *unseen* which they can never foresee or forestall, and against which they can never provide. The Indian ideal of regarding sufferings as sure signs of future good can never be controverted, as long as human efforts and struggles are judged in human light only. Of course eternal pain unmixed with pleasure would be a positive evil, and a Hindu has no such belief in there being eternal pain in this life or in the life hereafter. But the temporal pain or sorrow, if it has contributed an element of tenderness and nobility tending towards Eternal Bliss, is not an evil ; on the contrary, it may end in supreme good. Man owes his redemption from sin through the sufferings of Christ, according to the Christian belief also. Had Jesus Christ not suffered on the cross, there would have been no redemption of mankind from sin, and there would have been no Eternal Bliss or Kingdom of Heaven.

It is an old saying that bitter experiences or lessons of wisdom learnt in the past, alone open our eyes to the realisation of the truth that our welfare, be it spiritual, moral or physical, lies in the discrimination of what is right and beneficial though unpleasant, from what is pleasant but harmful. Such experiences mostly arise

from our defeats and disappointments, our mental and bodily afflictions. But the experiences derived from sufferings, or a habitual life of suffering alone cannot have that effect in moulding a man's character which it would have, if it were at the same time accompanied by the unfoldment of his inner powers through education, not through the education which we at present receive in our schools and colleges, but through a real education of the heart and the soul, which is of quite a different character. This, however, forms the subject of the next chapter.

IV.—THE IDEAL OF EDUCATION UNFOLDING THE INNER POWERS OF MAN.

The word education is derived from the Latin *educere* meaning *to lead forth* or *develop*. It, therefore, means development of what is already present in a man. Real education does not mean imparting any thing external or any thing that is not present within already. The aid of books and a teacher is necessary to serve only as an external impetus or a stimulus for drawing out what is already present in a potential state. This is perfectly true in the case of spiritual education, and to an extent, in the case of secular education also. It is necessary that the books and the teacher that are instrumental in developing real knowledge, should be of the nature or character that may help and not obstruct the true development of the inner faculties whether intellectual, moral or spiritual. According to the *Vedanta*, the *Atman* or the Self is the ultimate source of all knowledge ; hence it is designated as Knowledge Absolute. It is true that there are both the dark and the bright sides of knowledge ; but be it remembered here that what is called the dark side of knowledge is merely the negation or the absence of the bright side. There is no essential difference of kind, and whatever difference there is, it lies in the degree of manifestation only ; or it may be said that a proper use of knowledge conduces to our well-being and has beneficial effects, while any improper use of it ends in injury to us. The bright or dark side of knowledge is developed according to the nature of the man under education. The one and the same instruction may lead to different results. It may awaken a high sense of true morality in one man, while it may tend to produce quite a reverse effect in another. Still much depends on the character of the teacher and the books chosen as instruments for imparting knowledge. As said by the Swami Vivekananda, quickening influence comes from outside,

and that works upon our potentialities. If this quickening influence is of a supreme character untainted by an unholy thought, the chances are of the man developing highly either morally or spiritually. Again there are seen different developments in men. Some develop intellectually only, others morally only, while still others spiritually only. Such instances are rare when a man develops in all the three lines. A man may be highly intellectual, but may not necessarily be spiritual or moral. We may study books all our lives, we may become very intellectual, and in the end we may find we have not developed spiritually. To quicken spirituality or even intellectuality in a man, the impulse must come from another soul. In order to convey this impulse in the first place, the soul from which it comes must possess the power of transmitting it, as it were, to another; and in the second place, the object to which it is transmitted must be fit to receive it. The seed must be a living seed, and the field must be ready ploughed, *i.e.*, the receiver of knowledge must be in fit mood or really desirous to receive it. These are the real teachers, and these are the real pupils. Besides these, others are playing with knowledge. "It is a mysterious law," says the Swami, "that as soon as the field is ready, the seed must come. As soon as one is desirous of knowledge, the transmitter or the instructor of it must come. But we oftentimes mistake such impulses for a real thirst after a knowledge; and so long as there are false impulses, we shall not find a real teacher." There are certain conditions necessary in the taught and also in the teacher. The conditions necessary in the taught are that there is a real thirst after knowledge; and perseverance and purity are essential for one who is seeking spiritual knowledge. The essential condition in a teacher whether of spiritual or secular knowledge is that he must be sinless or of high moral character. Swami Vivekananda was once asked by a friend in England:—"Why should we look to the personality of a teacher? We have only to judge of what he says, and take that up." This is certainly not true at all in the matter

of spiritual education, but in choosing teachers for instructing our children in secular knowledge even, we must look to the character of the teacher, for the foremost consideration in the education of our boys or girls is the development of a high moral and religious sense in them, side by side with the intellectual awakening. Another condition is motive. We should see that the teacher imparts his knowledge for no ulterior motive, such as name, fame or gain, but that out of pure love for his pupil. In the matter of secular education, this condition may not be considered essential, but still true knowledge, whether secular or spiritual, is never imparted unless a teacher is free from all self-considerations. If a teacher is selfish and cares more for his pay than the good of his pupil, then he is sure to fail in imparting any true knowledge to him. There should besides be a holy relationship established between a teacher and his pupil. A teacher must be regarded in the light of the father, and the pupil in the light of the son. It is very well to talk of liberty and independence, but without humility submission, veneration and faith, neither spiritual nor secular knowledge is truly gained.

Now what do we find on our colleges and hostels? Just the opposite of all this. The teachers are rarely in touch with their pupils, much less they have any true love for them. The pupils, on the other hand, regard their teachers as tyrants and would be very glad to get rid of them, if they could. It is very rare that a paid teacher devotes his heart and soul to the education of his pupils. If the boys cram what they have been taught and pass examinations, that is enough for earning credit and the increase of pay. It is not his business to look out whether the education given by him has produced a useful member of society or not. Education is at present made a means of livelihood which strictly speaking does not come within its scope. Instructions in arts and sciences to enable a man to earn his livelihood is quite a different thing.

The instruction that is at present given to a child familiarizes him from the very beginning with concrete ob-

jects such as figures or pictures of birds and animals. Instead of this it would be better and would certainly help in awakening intellectual and spiritual impulses in the child, if, as of old, the sound of the sacred syllable Om or that of the *Gayatri Mantra* were first to enter his ears—that grand prayer of the Hindus wherein the intellectual or spiritual enlightenment alone and not any mundane desire is sought. A Hindu boy as soon as he enters the life of a student, begins to pray every morning as follows :—“ Glory to that Excellent Divine Vivifier of the Universe, may He enlighten our understandings ! ” This, however, does no longer hold good at present, in cases of those students who are receiving secular education. Formerly a nurse when fondling a baby used to fondle it with the word *siddhosi*, i.e., “ thou art perfect, thou art perfect,” thus keeping the baby in touch with spirituality from the very beginning of its life.

The moral precepts that are imparted to young folks in the various Readers serve only to aggravate the evil rather than lessen it, their real object. Says the Swami Rama Tirtha :—

“ Foolish moralists ! Religious fiends ! hands off ! you have no right to dictate to the young folks. The only right anybody has is to serve. Nature if allowed to have her free course, will never err. The law or God that worked up the evolution of man from the tinniest amoeba to the human form divine, can well be trusted. Why are cattle and other animals more regularly cleaner and better behaved in the control of what human jealousy has styled animal passions? The plain reason is that the former are not pestered by “ thou shalt ” and “ thou shalt nots.” Service and love and not mandates and compulsions is the atmosphere for growth. So long as any trace of external obligation and catagorical imperatives, “ thou shalt ” and “ thou shalt nots ” is in play, there can be no room for spiritual growth. The Imperative Mood, Second Person keeps alive in us the limited personality ; and wherever there is limitation, there is no bliss, nor any escape from attraction

and repulsion, no salvation from attachment and hatred, no freedom from vacillation and temptation. It is through realisation of one's Infinity conquering all sense of difference, feeling our oneness with all, that temptations lose all power over us."

The reason as to why Swami Rama Tirtha is against imparting all moral precepts to young folks, seems to be this that these moral precepts simply tend to awaken in the minds of young children feelings of desires that otherwise would have remained latent or undeveloped. When an undeveloped child is told to abstain from speaking falsehood, he becomes aware of there being any such thing as falsehood which, as it often times proves to be the case, is a means of gratifying desires. Finding that a habit of speaking falsehood helps him in satisfying his desires, he being too young to realise its remote evil consequences, easily gets addicted to it, from which he would have been free, had he not been told what falsehood is and had he not realised what its advantages are. Had not Adam been forbidden from eating the fruit of the tree of knowledge, there would have certainly been produced no temptation in him to eat the forbidden fruit.

Manu has laid down certain rules for the guidance of a Brahmachari living the life of a student. A student is forbidden to anoint his body with sweet-scented oils, or to wear garlands of fragrant flowers. He should abstain from causing injury to animal life and should avoid eating delicious dishes particularly meat. He should not wear shoes or use umbrellas. He should not dance or sing or attend dancing and singing parties, or play upon instruments. He should not entertain lustful thoughts, and should keep himself free from anger and avarice. He should abstain from gambling and from speaking falsehood, and must also avoid speaking ill of others. He should not seek the society of women with any lustful inclinations. He should beg his food from the families of house-holders other than his near relatives and kinsmen, and must collect it from a number of houses, and not from a single family only. He

must attend to the service of his preceptor, and should not do any thing for which he has not obtained his previous permission. He must rise from his bed very early in the morning before it is time for his preceptor to get up. In short, he must obey his preceptor implicitly. A preceptor, father, mother and elder brother must never be treated with disrespect even if any of them has been unkind to him. The debt due to parents for the hardships they have undergone in bringing up a son since his birth, can never be repaid by him even in hundred years. He must keep his parents and preceptor always pleased with him, and this is the highest austerity. He must not disobey any of these. He should not act with any independence in any matter, as long as any one of them is alive. But woe! to the changed condition of the country and the times, when all these ideals of a student's or a house-holder's life have been entirely upset under the effects of the present education and mode of living. A destitute parent or preceptor has now no claim upon his son or pupil for his support ; and while the law can enforce upon the husband a decree for the maintenance of his wife, in case the latter is deserted by him, there is now no legal obligation upon the son to provide for the maintenance of his destitute father or mother. Whatever moral obligation there is in regard to this, it is very seldom observed, and is mostly avoided by persons who look upon their parents merely as their generators having brought them into existence to endure sufferings only.

The system of living in the Guru's family as long as one was under instruction, was very beneficial in keeping him free from all taints to which one is exposed when living a city life and moving among friends and relatives. He also escaped from being ruined by the injurious effects of an indulgent father or mother's tenderness or of evil company. While living in the forests, the boy was in constant touch with nature ; and it is said that gifted students were spiritually awakened by the observation of one or the other natural phenomenon only.

For instance, it is related about Satyakama that one day when returning with his preceptor's cows from the forests, his face was unusually beaming with radiance, upon which his Guru at once remarked :—" Boy ! thy face is to-day beaming with *Brahman*. It appears that thou hast known *Brahman* (Self-knowledge). It is needless to narrate here the whole story as to how was Satyakama awakened to Self-knowledge in the forests. But all this is a dream now which can never be realised in the changed condition of the country and the times. It is rare that one seeks Self-knowledge now. Besides there are at present neither Gurus of the old type, nor are there earnest seekers of truth. If our modern hostels were managed on a principle in which the element of a life of renunciation is introduced, and the boarders are in constant touch with a highly morally and spiritually gifted person in the shape of the Superintendent or so, the present defects of a hostellery life will be, to an extent, remedied.

Now the chief point is that howsoever a man's inner powers may have been developed through education, this alone is of no avail for lifting up an aspirer for the highest truth to the highest plane of spirituality, unless he is at the same time fortified with the belief in the dispensation of God whose mercy or grace is the greatest element in the attainment of every goal, whether on the material or spiritual plane. How shou'd we worship God and what form our devotion to Him should take, is a vital question for a person whose goal is attainment of spirituality or realisation of the highest Truth. This subject is, however, treated in the next chapter.



V. THE IDEAL OF DIVINE LOVE AND OF RELIGIOUS TOLERATION.

Bhakti or intense love for God is, in fact, the grandest ideal of Hinduism. Everybody worships and prays to God. The question therefore is: Is there any peculiarity in the worship of God by the Hindus that so great an importance is being attached to it? We pray to God for His blessings and for our daily bread; and if we have not transgressed His commandments, we expect from Him the grant of all our prayers. Worship of God, should therefore, be treated as an ordinary matter only. If we simply attend our churches or mosques or temples and pray fervently to Him for His blessings, acknowledging Him as our Lord God, we may think we have done our duty to Him. We are His creatures, and as such, we are bound to worship our Creator by offering our daily prayers to Him, asking for His blessings and thanking Him for the blessings received. So our form of prayer should be like what is prescribed in the Bible, which is quite enough for all our purposes. Such is in fact the trend of reasoning adopted by persons who disagree with the method of worship followed by the Hindu devotees of God. The form of prayer referred to above is as follows:—

“Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil; for Thine is the kingdom and the power, and the glory for ever.—Amen.”

The above is the Semetic mode of praying to God who is worshipped not only for gloryfying Him, but mostly with the object that He may give us our daily bread or grant us some other blessings. It will be seen from the sequel that this form of prayer is exactly the opposite of

what a Hindu devotee would like to offer to his God. A Hindu devotee who is a real lover of God, would never pray in this wise, for Bhakti or love of God cannot be used to fulfil any desires or to seek grant of prayers, itself being the check on all desires. Narada gives these as the signs of the love of God :—

“ When all thoughts, all words and all deeds are given up unto the Lord, and the least forgetfulness of God makes one intensely miserable, then it can be said that love has begun. This is the highest form of love, because therein there is no desire for reciprocity which exists in all human love. With a true lover of God that day is indeed a bad day when he does not speak of the Lord. Thinking of God some weep, some sing, some laugh, some dance, some say wonderful things, but all speak of nothing but God.”

Such is the ideal of a Hindu devotee's love for God, as opposed to the teachings of Christ who says :—“ When ye pray, use not vain repetitions as the heathens do, for they think they will be heard for their much speaking.” A Hindu heathen, however, does not want to be heard for any grant of prayers, but simply wants a constant remembrance of God purely out of love for Him, free from all selfish motives.

People who have not realised what the grand ideal of love for God is as understood by the Hindus, may say anything they choose against it ; but to speak the truth, the Bhakti of Hindus is both a science and an art. In order to make researches in this particular science, one has to dig deep and penetrate into the innermost regions of his heart, instead of searching in vain for the truths of this science in the external world ; and whatever external helps are necessary, are required only to illumine the inner darkness and to remove all hindrances in the way of realisation of the said truths. For experiments in other sciences, we have recourse to external objects, but for making experiments in this science of Bhakti, we must deal with human passions, human affections and the

various potentialities of a man's inner powers. The greatest knowers or the scientists in this particular branch of science were Narada and Sandilya, the former treating it from the dualistic and the latter from the non-dualistic standpoint. Both are masters of this science, and their aphorisms are very instructive and interesting to read. As illustrated by the Swami Abhedananda in the modern language and thought, the purport of their researches is as follows :—

Bhakti means love of God. What is love? The nature of love is to attract. Wherever there is an expression of love, there is manifested a kind of mutual attachment and a mutual feeling of possession. But in the intensity of love that attachment becomes so close that the lover and the beloved both are united into one. They have two separate bodies, but their mind, heart and soul are united in the same key; when the one is struck, the other responds. "Love is attraction between a soul and a soul," says the Swami Abhedananda, "Matter cannot attract the soul. However ugly a child may be, the mother when kissing and caressing it does not look its ugliness. She considers her new born babe to be the best, finest and the most beautiful of all. Do you think that when a true mother loves the face of her child, she loves merely the material particles that make up the beautiful form? Certainly not. It is the soul of the child lying behind the material form that attracts the soul of the mother." It is for this reason, said in the *Vedanta*: A mother loves her child not for the child's sake, but for the sake of the soul, the *Atman*, the Lord that lives in the child. But, says the Swami Abhedananda, ordinary human love or human affection which binds the soul to the earthly conditions and makes it attached to the pleasures of the senses is blind. It brings sorrow, suffering and misery in the end. Human affection naturally seeks a return of love. No one has ever seen a lover in the human plane, in worldly life, who does not expect to be loved in turn and who does not seek some kind of return for his or her love. If the person

loved is seen loving another, a strong current of jealousy at once sets in. In the spiritual plane, however, there are hundreds of instances where men or women have sacrificed every thing, even their lives for the love of some ideal, whether it be personal or impersonal, without seeking any return whatsoever. Herein is the expression of what is called Divine Love. Any thing or any act that makes us forget our dear little self, our dear little individuality, is divine, because it leads Godward. Every drop of that stream of love which flows in a human heart, contains the germ of Divine Love. It varies in its character, according to the direction towards which it flows and to the nature by which it is governed. When it flows towards one's own self, it is animal, when towards another for mutual benefit or for earthly return, it is worldly and human, and when it is directed towards the Divine Ideal, it is divine.

Divine love seeks no return. Whenever there is a feeling of getting any thing as a return of love, it is like a shop-keeper's love for his customer, or like a paid servant's love for his master. There is no expression of unselfish love in the service of a paid servant. Similarly a man who serves God for some kind of return, has no unselfish love in his heart. "One who wants to love God," says the Swami Vivekananda, "must make a bundle of all desires and leave them outside the door and then enter. It is not that you do not get any thing, but it is low, vulgar, a beggar's religion. Fool indeed is the man who coming to a mine of diamonds begins to search for glass beads. These prayers for health, wealth and material prosperity are not included in the true love of God. We are striving to come into the presence of the King of kings. We cannot get there in a beggar's dress. So it goes without saying that the first task in becoming a true lover of God is to give up all desires, even of heaven. The Christian idea of heaven is a place of intensified enjoyment. How can that be God? The love of a devotee must be absolutely pure and unselfish, seeking nothing for itself either here or hereafter. We may be praying to God for fulfilment of desires, but desires have

no end and are insatiable. We think that in salvation at least will our desires be fulfilled, and so we desire to go to heaven ; and therefore, worship God so that He may be pleased to give us abode in heaven. But the desire to go to heaven is after all a desire for enjoyment. This eternal unquenchable thirst for enjoyment ! This must be given up. There may be many of such heavens, but through them you cannot get the right to enter the gates of religion and Divine Love."

The contrast between this ideal of the love of God and the form of the Semetic prayer quoted above, is so vivid and significant that it needs no comment by us.

Divine Love knows no fear. Can there be love where the motive power is fear and punishment ? No. Can there be love in a slave who serves his master through fear of being punished, if he did not serve ? Love and fear cannot dwell in the same place at the same time.

A true lover of God loves every thing of the world. Divine love opens his spiritual eyes, and he realises that every thing comes from God, that every thing is God's, that all living creatures are His children. He sees the Divine Ideal as manifesting itself through all animate and inanimate objects of the universe. So he cannot help loving every thing and all beings equally.

A true lover of God, according to the Gita, is he who hates no creature and is friendly and compassionate to all, who is free from feelings of ' me and mine,' even-minded in pain and pleasure, ever content and steady in meditation, and self-controlled ; is he who cannot be agitated by the world and by whom the world is not agitated, and to whom censure and praise are equal.

Divine Love brings the highest ecstatic or super-conscious state in which the individual soul eternally communes with God, the Universal Spirit. Sri Ramakrishna used to say :—" The two characteristics of ecstatic love are first he forgetfulness of the external world, the second the for-

getfulness of one's own body which is so dear to one." Says the saint and poet Kabir :—

1. The wine of Divine Love is ever flowing which many a people wish to taste, but which few only are able to drink, *i.e.*, those only who have the courage to offer themselves as a sacrifice in His path.

2. The path of Divine Love is as sharp as the edge of a sword over which a devotee has to tread to reach his Beloved.

3. It is said that none but the brave deserves the fair. No, the truth is that none but the brave deserves to see the beautiful face of God.

4. He who fights with weapons is not the hero, but he who conquers passion or desire and gives up the world for the love of God is verily! the greatest hero.

This is indeed the grand ideal of Divine Love as understood and practiced by the Hindus. Can there be any comparison between this ideal and the ordinary conceptions of Godhead in the Semetic religions? The Hindu is not content with any imaginary Ideal of his God, but as a true and sincere seeker after Divine Love, sets up before him a Divine Ideal in the shape of an Incarnation of God, *i.e.*, in the form of a man. In regard to these Incarnations of God, the Swami Vivekananda says as follows :—

"No man hath 'seen' God, but as He is manifested in man. We cannot see God. If we try to see Him or have a conception of Him in our minds, we make a hideous caricature of Him. There may come time, however, when we may transcend human nature and know Him as He is, but so long as we are men, we must worship Him in man. Talk as we may, try as we may, we cannot see God or conceive of Him except as a man. When next you hear a man delivering great intellectual lectures as regards the various aspects of God, get hold of him and ask him what is his idea of God, what does he mean by 'omnipotence' and 'omniscience,' etc., beyond the spelling of the words. He means nothing, he cannot formulate any idea. Man has no idea of the spirit, he has to think of it with the

forms he has before him. He has to think of the blue skies or the expansive fields or the sea, a something huge, in order to have the conception of the infinity or the omnipresence of God. So what are you doing in reality ? You are talking of omnipresence and thinking of the sea. Is God the sea ? So we are by our present condition limited and bound to see God as man. If the buffaloes want to worship God, they will see him as a huge buffalo. When man sees Him, He sees Him as man, and the animal as animal, each according to his ideal. That is the only way you can see Him, you have to worship Him as man, because there is no other way out of it. Two classes of men do not worship God as man, the human brute who has no religion, and the *paramahansa* who has gone beyond humanity, who has thrown off his body and mind and gone beyond the limits of nature. Then all nature has become his self. The extremely ignorant do not worship God, not developed enough to feel the need for so doing. Between these two poles of existence, if any one tells you that he is not going to worship God as man, take care of him. He is an irresponsible talker, he is mistaken, his religion is for frothy thinkers, it is intellectual nonsense. Therefore it is absolutely necessary to worship God as man, and blessed are those races which have such a God-man to worship. Christians have such a God-man in Christ, the Buddhists in Buddha and the Hindus in their various incarnations of God, such as Rama and Krishna."

To speak the truth, there can be no love for an imaginary conception of God ; and a Hindu devotee has, therefore, recourse to those concrete Manifestations of God of whom mention is made in his Holy Scriptures. This will certainly appear strange, in view of the strict teachings of the *Vedanta* wherein the reality even of the Personal God is not acknowledged. But having regard to the nature of the Absolute which is Indefinable, Unmanifested, Unthinkable and Unchangeable, and also looking to the words of the Gita wherein it is said that greater is their trouble whose minds are set on the Unmanifested, as the goal of

the Unmanifested is very hard for the embodied to reach, the devotee who is still living in the plane of relativity, loves to worship the Concrete Form of God only, with the view of holding communion with the Supreme Soul.

When adopting a Divine Ideal for worship, a devotee must remember that his devotion to his Ideal must be in the form of an intellectual service of the Lord, and not a blind service of Him, the object of his devotion being the illumination of his inner self and not mere outward repetitions of the Lord's name or the singing of His praises, all of which must be accompanied with sincerity of heart and earnestness.

The Divine Ideal or the Personal God worshipped by a devotee is the same Absolute of the *Vedanta* seen through the maze of *Maya*. When we approach It with the five senses, we can also see It as a Personal God. The idea is that the Self cannot be objectified. How can the Knower know Himself; but it can cast a shadow as it were, if that can be called objectification. So the highest form of that shadow, that attempt of objectifying itself, is the Personal God.

There have, however, been devotees who like Prahlada have combined the ideal of love for a Personal God with that of realisation of the Absolute in one's own self. There is, indeed, a spiritual state, rather a transcendental state, wherein true Divine Love and true knowledge of Self both meet together. When the Divine Love and Self-knowledge are thus combined in a man, he is a devotee as well as a philosopher in one. Such a man when full of devotion to God praises Him in the following strain :—

“ Praised be my Beloved Hari, the Lord of the world, whose Glory and Power are manifest in all the Phenomena of the Universe, nay who Himself is present in each and every object or form that is manifest, nay who is the very Essence of our souls, and who is therefore, the Only One Being we love with our whole hearts, He being in fact All Love or Love Personified.”

In the next strain when he is in the state of *Samadhi* or what is called the Supersensuous state, wherein there is no working of the senses, mind or intellect, or no idea of a separate existence, he repeats as follows :—

“I am neither mind nor intellect, nor egoism, nor *chit* or intelligence, nor the senses of hearing, seeing, smelling, touch or taste, nor ether, fire, air, water or earth, neither this nor that, but am Siva or God Himself who is pure Existence, Knowledge and Bliss absolute.”

Sri Ramakrishna used to say that pure Divine Love and pure Self-knowledge are one and the same. According to the doctrine of *Bhakti*, God is held to be All Love (*Premaswarupa*). So there is no love outside of Himself. One cannot even say : “I love Him ;” for the reason that He is All Love. So the love that is in the heart with which you love Him is even He Himself. In a similar way whatever attractions or inclinations one feels drawn by are all He Himself. The wife loves her husband, the mother loves her child, in each of these is He. According to the doctrine of *Jnana* or Self-Knowledge, He is realised by one everywhere and within his own heart, or in other words, his own self is He as well as the Self of the whole Universe. Herein is the reconciliation of *Bhakti* and *Jnana*.

Perfection in *Bhakti* or Love of God is most essential. Half ways are of no good. To attain this perfection it is necessary that the man on the path of love should practice *Abhyasa Yoga*, i.e., his mind should always go towards God, no other things have any right to withhold it. Says the Swami Vivekananda :—“As oil poured from one vessel into another falls in one unbroken stream, as chimes coming from a distance fall upon the ear as one continuous sound, so should the mind flow towards God in one continuous stream. The greatest aid to this practice of keeping God in memory is the singing of the Lord’s praises. Music has a tremendous effect in producing concentration of mind in a moment. . . . The most essential element in *Bhakti* is what is called earnestness. We must daily ask our-

selves the question : Do we want God, or do we want sense-pleasures ? He who desires God and God alone will get His Love. Unfortunately too often we make the world the end and God the means. We find people going to church and praying : God, give me so and so, God heal my disease. They want healthy bodies and because they hear that God will do this work for them, they go and pray to Him. That is all their religion, that is all their devotion to God. They want things of the world and not God."

When Divine Love opens a devotee's spiritual eye and he realises his Divine Ideal into every form, and sees Him also as manifesting Himself through the various Forms of the Divinity worshipped by others, he has no cause for hating anybody or fighting with any person about the truth of any particular ideal of God. So the Divine Love opens the way to a perfect religious toleration, as there is no belief in the world with which he cannot accord in view of the universality of his chosen Ideal. The Lord too in the Gita says :—

1. I am the Self, O Gudakesha ' existent in the hearts of all beings. I am the beginning, the middle and also the end of all beings.

2. Whatever being there is great, prosperous or powerful, that know thou to be a product of a part of My Splendour.

3. Neither the hosts of *Devas*, nor the great *Rishis* know My Lordly Power, for in every way I am the source of all the *Devas* and the great *Rishis*.

4. But there are people who deprived of discrimination by this or that desire and following this or that rite, devote themselves to the worship of the *Devas* (inferior gods) led by their own inclinations.

5. Whichever form of Divinity or whichever *Deva* a devotee seeks to worship with faith, I make that faith of him unwavering in that particular form of Divinity or *Deva*,

6. Endued with that faith he engages in the worship of that particular Form (or divinity) and from it gains his desires—those being verily dispensed by Me alone.

Commentary.—Because I am the only One Lord God the bestower of all boons.

7. But the fruit accruing to these men of little understanding is limited. The worshippers of the *Devas* go to the *Devas*, My worshippers come to Me.

Commentary.—The idea is that while one may get fulfilment of desires by worshipping the *Devas*, in the shape of heavenly or earthly enjoyments which have an end, the person worshipping the Supreme Lord either as an Impersonal or Personal God attains *Moksha* or freedom from birth and death. Though the *Devas* are considered as immortals compared to human beings, they too have to fall from their exalted position at the end of every *Kalpa*, and are born again in the mortal world, and so also their votaries whose fall is even earlier than that of their respective gods.

8. Even those devotees who endued with faith worship other gods, *i.e.*, the *Devas*, worship Me only, though in the wrong method (*i.e.*, ignorantly, not in the way by which they can be freed from the round of birth and death).

Commentary.—Because I am present in every form of the *Devas*, as *Antaryamin* or God Immanent, or as One Supreme Self of the whole universe forming the substratum of the whole manifestation, or as the only One Noumenon of the whole Phenomena.

9. I alone am the Enjoyer and Lord of all *Yajnas*, but because people do not know Me in reality, they return to the mortal world.

Commentary.—Whatever offerings are made through *Yajnas* (Sacrifices) or other forms of worship, are received by the One Almighty God only, as He is the only One Receiver of them, though they may be intended for other gods (*i.e.*, the *Devas*) by their devotees. Though it is a fact that all offerings are accepted by the Supreme Lord only,

yet the devotee through ignorance as to the Supreme God alone being the Receiver of them, offers them to other gods regarding them as distinct personalities independent of the One Supreme Lord, and therefore, is subject to birth and death.

The above quotations from the Gita clearly show how the ideas of Monism, Monotheism and Polytheism are interwoven throughout its teachings, the grand truth of One Unity or of One Absolute Existence underlying all the three phases of belief respecting Godhead being strictly maintained.

Monotheism like absolute monarchy is quick in executing orders, and a great centralization of force, but it grows no further ; and its worst feature is its cruelty and persecution. For instance, one of the ten commandments of Jehovah the Jewish God to Moses is :—"Thou shall not bow down thyself to other gods before me, for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me." This has no doubt proved a source of much persecution in the past amongst the followers of the Semetic religions, for the tribes that did not accept the worship of God under any particular name or form, were terribly persecuted by the adherents of that God, causing immense bloodshed.

In India the same problem presented itself and the solution was found in the teaching :—"That which exists is One, sages call it variously."

In the belief of a Hindu, every nation's God under whatever name and in whatever form He is worshipped, is his God, as in reality there can be no two Gods; and therefore, having regard to the above texts of the Gita, he can not deny the aliens' God, though he may not actually worship Him in that particular form. Herein the essential element is sincerity or faith. When there is no sincerity at the bottom of worship, no matter under whatever splendid or glorious name or appellation God may be worshipped, and there is no expression of true devotion

in the worshipper's heart, it is immaterial for such a man whether he worships God or an image or any other object.

From the above quotations it is clear how broad a view has been taken in the Gita about the worship of God. Our watchword should, therefore, be construction and not destruction. All along in the history of the Hindu race, there never was any attempt at destruction, as there was only construction. We have had a host of reformers who were always constructive, and built according to the circumstances of their times. The progress of the Hindu race has been towards the attainment of Vedantic Ideals.

Our fundamental idea is that the form of belief professed by a particular man or class of men may not be agreeable to another. Each one must have his own way. In the same family a daughter may have one method and a son another, and the father or mother again, another. So each one has an *Ishtam* or chosen ideal, and each one keeps it to himself or herself. It is a secret between the particular person and his Guru, as it is not desirable to create a fight. It is quite possible for one to be a dualist, and for another to be monist, and so on. Why should there be any fight so long as one is a sincere believer of his chosen ideal.

There was never any religious persecution in India, and people professing different creeds lived amicably together. If there was ever any such persecution in ancient times, it originated once only from the fight between the followers of the old Brahminical or Vedic creed and those who professed the creed of Buddha. Ignorant Hindus think that the religion preached by Buddha is inimical to the Vedic religion ; and notwithstanding that they admit Buddha the founder of Buddhism to be the ninth Incarnation of Vishnu, they revile Him for preaching a religion antagonistic to the Vedas. As a matter of fact Buddha never preached anything antagonistic to the Vedas. He only condemned Vedic sacrifices with offerings of animals; and if this is considered as antagonistic to the Vedas, then

Sri Krishna is equally open to the same charge, for He too though not actually condemning Vedic sacrifices, has expressed His strong deprecation of them in explicit terms. *Vide* various texts of the Gita chapter II—42 to 46, chapter III—17, chapter VIII—28 and chapter IX—21.

So Buddha preached what Sri Krishna had already taught. Sri Krishna dwelt on the superiority or excellence of Self-knowledge compared with the pleasures of heaven obtainable by animal sacrifices, while Buddha laid stress on the virtue of non-injuriousness. Buddha's mission was that of love, universal love, a mission of mercy to be shewn to all creatures, men and animals alike. The objects of both the God-men were the same. They both wished to suppress the Vedic sacrifices involving so much slaughter of animals ; but as Sri Krishna did not like to suppress them at once, He simply extolled Self-knowledge as contrasted with the sacrifices and thus discouraged them. When these sacrifices were still carried on in spite of Sri Krishna's deprecation of them, with more and more slaughter of animals, the same Sri Krishna appeared again as Lord Buddha who condemned in strong terms not only the Vedic sacrifices, but also the life of severe asceticism led by the people in His time. Sri Krishna had also spoken against asceticism, as will be seen from the following quotation from the Gita :—

“Those men who practice severe austerities not enjoined by the Shastras, given to ostentation and egoism, possessed with the power of lust and attachment, torturing, senseless as they are, all the organs in the body and Me dwelling in the body within; know them to be of Asuric or demoniacal resolve.” Chap. XVII—5-6.

Buddha made no distinction of caste in preaching his doctrines. Similarly Sri Krishna also made no distinction of a Brahman or a Sudra in having the right for the acquisition of Self-knowledge, as declared by Him in the following *Sloka* of the Gita :—

“For taking refuge in Me, they also O Arjuna, who

might be of inferior birth, women, Vaisyas as well as Sudras, even they attain to the Supreme Goal." IX-32.

It is, therefore, conclusively proved that Buddha's mission was only a fulfilment of that of Sri Krishna. When both were the Incarnations of one and the same Deity, how could their missions be antagonistic to each other.

Now as regards the charge of preaching atheistic doctrines, brought against Buddha, the fact is that He never preached any such thing. His followers carried His doctrines too far or rather have stretched them to serve their own purposes. His mission was philanthropy and Universal love which appeals to the heart rather than to the head ; and, therefore, there was no necessity for Him to indulge in intellectual speculations as regards the existence of soul or God.

Similarly Christ's mission too is not regarded by the Hindus as antagonistic to that of Sri Krishna. Having regard to the famous utterance of Sri Krishna in the Gita which is that whenever virtue subsides and irreligion and wickedness get predominant in the world, He manifests Himself in every age and every clime, or that whatever being is great or powerful that should be known to be a manifestation of His own Energy or Power, a Hindu is not precluded from accepting Christ, if not actually as an Incarnation of God, but at least as a Manifestation of His Energy or Glory. It will be seen that there is a remarkable resemblance between certain teachings of Christ mentioned in the New Testament and those of the Gita, though differing slightly in certain respects, owing to the difference in beliefs of the people to whom both these great Saviours of the world were addressing. Christ was addressing the Jews among whom the idea of a soul existing separately from the body or at least of the immortality of soul had not till then developed ; and, therefore, Christ's teachings were more or less toned down in conformity with their prejudices and previous convictions.

Christians attach a great importance to repentance from sin which is taken by them to have an absolute existence, the cause of all the woes of man and in the beginning of creation the cause of his fall from heaven. As opposed to this, in the teachings of the *Vedanta*, sin has no existence in the absolute sense, its relative existence being due to our ignorance only about our already being the absolute and eternal Bliss, the real cause of all our woes and of our fall from the Divine state. But seeing that the existence in the world of what is called relative sin cannot be denied, Sri Krishna has not left this question untouched in the Gita ; for He is very considerate to the sinners also who have at least begun to mend their evil ways by their devotion to Him. He says :—

“ I am the same to all beings ; to Me there is none hateful nor dear. But those who worship Me with devotion, they are in Me, and I too am in them. Even if a sinner worships Me with devotion, he too should be regarded as good, having rightly resolved ; for soon does he become righteous and attains to Eternal Peace. O son of Kunti, boldly do thou proclaim to all that My Bhakta, or devotee never comes to grief.”

The Lord in one voice when speaking of persons who are living a life of righteousness, says to Arjuna :—“ *Nahi kalyana krit kaschiddurgatim tata gachchhati*”, i.e., “the door of good or a righteous man whoever he may be, O My son, never comes to grief.” In another voice when indulgent on sinners who are His devotees and are mending their evil ways, He says :—“ *Kaunteya pratijanihi na me bhaktah pranashyati*,” i.e., “ O son of Kunti, boldly do thou proclaim that My Bhakta or devotee, howsoever a sinner he may have been, never perishes.”

The Lord's Grace falls on His devotees not on account of any attachment on His part. As the Sun's light though pervading everywhere is best reflected in a clean mirror, so also is the Supreme Lord present in those hearts only, from which all the dirt not only of sin but of all ignorance has been removed by a constant devotion to Him ; for be

it remembered that it is not sin alone which prevents a man from realising the presence of the Lord in his heart, but even virtuous acts are very often great hinderances in the way of the said realisation, when done with selfish motives, such as for the sake of name or fame or with egoism, having root in one's ignorance in regarding himself as the doer and enjoyer which he is not, he being truly the *Atman* or the Absolute which is neither the doer nor enjoyer. This subject has, however, been treated at length in my previous work, "the Mystery of God and the Universe," which may be read with advantage.

As a matter of fact there are two phases of belief among the Hindus in regard to this particular question of sin. The Bhaktas, *i.e.*, the devotees of God freely admit sin in themselves, craving at the same time for the Lord's mercy and grace, whom they invoke for a forgiveness of their sins by some such names as the Purifier of sinners, the Lord of the fallen, the All Merciful, etc. The Jnanis or philosophers, on the other hand, holding no such belief as regards the existence of sin in any absolute sense, regard it as a sign of utter weakness in a man confessing what he is not, he being already pure and perfect in essence. Their motto is strength and not weakness ; consequently, they say that if one is strong enough to declare that he is pure and perfect and not a sinner, he is certainly a pure being only what he is already and what he has always been, but what he has forgotten through delusion that has enveloped his intellect, producing in him this nightmare of sin, the dread of which keeps alive in him the thought that he is fallen, that he is a sinner. As soon as the light of realisation of the real Truth shines in his heart, all darkness of ignorance which is the real sin, is at once removed; and then and then alone, shines in him the light of the *Atman* which though ever present, appears, as it were, covered up by a thick veil, the veil of desires. The one is the way to salvation through repentance from sins and their forgiveness by God, for which entire reliance is placed on His mercy and grace, while the other is the

way to the same goal through realisation of one's self as the Supreme Self or the Self of the Universe with the aid of diverse *Sadhanas* or austerities prescribed in the *Vedanta*, culminating in what is called *Samadhi* or the Superconscious state. The first way appears at first sight easier than the other, but be it remembered that unless the germ of desire is burnt by living a life of perfect mental renunciation, mere repentance from sin is of no avail, and for this it is essential that there should be a complete absorption in the love of God.

If any human love at all approaches the above lofty ideal of Divine Love, it is the love of a Hindu wife for her husband which forms the subject of the next chapter.



VI.—THE IDEAL OF WIFEHOOD AND OF WIDOWHOOD.

A wife is regarded by the Hindus as a complement of the husband in all respects, not a bodily complement only but a spiritual complement also. A marriage among the Hindus is, therefore, a sacrament and is performed with *Vedic mantras* which are regarded as having the efficacy of uniting two separate bodies and souls into one body and soul. It is for this reason that a wife is considered as half of the husband's body, *i.e.*, his *ardhangi*, or in other words, the complement of the husband in every respect. She is specially held as his complement at the time when any religious ceremony is being performed, which a husband cannot rightly perform unless the wife is associated with him at the time of its performance. A wife is also called *Jaya*, because it is she in whose womb the husband is reproduced in the body of their common son.

It is not necessary for a Hindu wife that she should herself separately perform any worship ; and if she has at all to worship any of the so-called gods and goddesses, that worship is always meant for the welfare and the longevity of her husband, her children or any other relative, and not in any way for her own good or welfare. Her husband only is to her in the light of a god or a Deva. But be it clearly understood here that in worshipping her husband as a Devata or a god, she does not regard him as God having powers of creation, preservation and dissolution. Far from it. She does not even seek from him the grant of any prayers or of any favours for herself, her devotion to him being purely out of love for him. The Devas are what should be called the powers of nature personified as beings or gods performing certain functions of nature, such as causing showers of rain on which depends the sustenance of human beings. The Sun, the Winds and the Fire are classed among the Devas. These Devas have to be propitiated through *yajnas* as stated, in the third chapter

of the Gita, so that they may send showers of rain. This act of propitiation is done by the husband with whom the wife is invariably associated ; and, therefore, she need not worship them independently of the husband. Her incessant devotion to her husband requires her attention to him alone without attending to any other matter, be it the worship of the gods or any other thing that does not directly or indirectly concern her husband and through him the whole of his family. As a return for this ceaseless devotion to her husband, she gets all the benefits of his prayers and austerities, sharing equally with him in all the enjoyments of heaven.

Among the Hindus the marriage knot is indissoluble, as no divorce is acknowledged by the Hindu Law. When the marriage knot is once tied, both the husband and the wife are united in wedlock for their lives. In the case of the husband, however, the law allows him to remarry in the lifetime of the wife or after her death without the dissolution of his marriage with her, in the event of his having no son by her. To have a son is considered so essential for the salvation of a Hindu and his ancestors that he must choose another wife whether the first wife be living or dead ; and besides this, as no religious ceremony can be rightly performed by a Hindu without being associated by his wife, forming, as it were, a component part of him, he has to enter into the married state again for the above purpose also, and not in any way for the gratification of lust, it being understood that marriage among the Hindus is a sacrament intended primarily for producing children for the spiritual benefit of the manes of the ancestors, and secondarily for the performance of religious rites. This is the reason why a husband or a widower is permitted to remarry. The widow, on the contrary, has no such obligation as regards the performance of religious ceremonies or as regards her salvation through a son, that depending entirely on her devotion to her husband in his lifetime and after his death also.

Intense devotion to the husband is in fact the noblest and the most sublime characteristic of a Hindu wife. This is most certainly an unique virtue in a Hindu woman ; and instances of the Hindu wives' devotion to their husbands are on record shewing what great sacrifices they have made out of pure love for their husbands and how devoted they have been to them in all their relations with them. A devoted Hindu wife does not care even for the return of her love by her husband. The celebrated poet and saint Kabir says :—

(1) A hero carries not a head, a generous man never accumulates wealth, and a devoted wife possesses not a body.

(2) The generous man may get lot of wealth again, and the hero may have twenty heads,* but a devoted wife never possesses a body, (her whole consciousness of there being any such thing as a body being entirely lost in the constant love and service of her husband.)

(3) A devoted wife when drinking the cup of devotion to her husband pays its penalty by losing her head. One who is unable to do so should not take the name of love.

(4) A devoted wife offers both her body and mind as a sacrifice to her husband, and loves to think constantly of him only, never caring for her body whether it lives or perishes. Such a wife though living is, as it were, quite dead, as she loses all consciousness of having any such thing as a body or mind. Wherever there is any such devoted wife, Kabir says, he will take pride in regarding himself as the dust of her feet.

A wife by her devotion to her husband acquires a position even superior to that of her husband, so much so that the name of the wife takes precedence over that of the husband. The highest instance of such an ideal of a devoted wife is that of Sita who has acquired on account of her devotion to Sri Rama a position even higher than

*A warrior is ever in danger of losing his head, and each time when he survives a battle gets, as it were, a new head.

that of her husband, and it is for this fact that her name takes precedence over that of Rama when both are invoked together. A Hindu invariably invokes them as Sita-Rama and not as Rama-Sita.

The ideal of a Hindu wife's devotion to her husband is so well known and the instances of such devotion are so numerous that we need not mention any of them here.

When Savitri was asked by her father to choose another person as her husband, after it was ascertained from Narada that the person she had already chosen was to die in a year only, she at once replied that after choosing once, a Hindu maiden never chooses twice even mentally in the matter of the choice of a husband.

There is a very beautiful story narrated in the Vana Parva of the Mahabharata illustrating the Hindu ideal of a wife's devotion to her husband. There was a Muni or Rishi by name Kausika who was engaged in severe austerities in a forest. He was seated under the shade of a tree absorbed in meditation, when a bird happened to evacuate upon his head. The Muni's wrath was kindled and lifting up his eyes gazed fiercely at the bird that was perched on a bough of the tree, reducing it to ashes. After this he went to a neighbouring village for the collection of alms and called at a house. A lady responded to his call, and finding that there was an ascetic at her door begging for food, told him to wait until she brought food for him. In the meantime her husband entered the house, and she at once went to attend to his wants. It was after a considerable delay that she reappeared at the door with the alms in her hand for the ascetic who had in the meantime exhausted all his patience in waiting for them. He questioned her at once rather in an offended tone as to her presumption in making a holy man wait at her door for a long time without attending to him at once as she ought to have done. She replied that she had been attending to the wants of her husband who had entered the house then only, a duty which in her eyes

was most sacred, even more sacred than the duty of attending to the wants of a Rishi ; and then added that his wrath to her was quite impotent to do her any harm and that she could not as easily be burnt to ashes as he had consumed the bird by his wrath in the forest. The Rishi was bewildered on hearing this, and on questioning her as to how she had known all about the bird in the forest, she replied that as a reward for her devotion to her husband, she had acquired that power of yoga which enables her to know things at distance beyond the ken of the senses.

The ideal of widowhood is perhaps the grandest of all the ideals of the Hindus. It is quite unique and peculiar to Hinduism only. There is perhaps no country or community in the world where or in which a widow is not permitted to remarry. A Hindu wife's devotion to her husband does not end with his life ; it lasts as long as she herself is living. For her, her husband is not dead, but ever living, living in the *Swarga* world or heaven ; and she constantly cherishes his memory leading a life of strict asceticism and austerity—a life of self-denial, a denial to herself of all pleasures. In fact her devotion to her husband gets intensified after she is separated from him for ever in this earthly life, which culminates even in self-immolation on her husband's funeral pyre. A true *Sati* is that who has completely forgotten herself in the love of her husband so much so that she loses all consciousness of her separate existence from him. The Hindu woman alone has the courage to sacrifice even her life so dear to every body in the love of one who is no longer capable of returning her love or affording her any bodily pleasure or comfort ; and it is she alone who burns her live body along with a body that is dead. Well it has been sung about her by a Persian poet who says :—

“There is no person braver than the Hindu woman in the field of love. Even a moth has not the courage to burn itself over an extinguished lamp.”

I do not wish to dwell on this subject at any length for fear of raising a controversy, as this question has recently

become a controversial matter. But my firm conviction and belief is that the ideal of widowhood is so grand, so lofty and so depictive of a very high state of chastity of our womanhood that any attempt to lower it in the estimation of men and women would lead to serious consequences, to the creation of a great revolution in the Hindu Society. This ideal must be placed before every widow, and her attention directed to the fact that all the nobility and grandeur in her character lies in the strict maintenance by her of this noble ideal, in cherishing her deceased husband's memory by mentally repeating the famous verse in which Padmavati the famous queen of Chittore when entering the funeral pyre of her husband is said to have spoken out as follows :—

“And the knot tied by thee O my beloved! can never be cut asunder, neither in the beginning, nor in the middle, nor in the end. It must remain tied for ever and ever.”

Of course if a widow is unable to curb her passion and falls from the path of devotion to her deceased husband, she must be considered as fallen from her high and lofty pedestal of chastity. Though she may remarry for the gratification of her sensual desires, the act of legality will only be changed into what should be called a legalized fall, her illegal surrender of herself in any other way being of course both a highly immoral and an illegal act of hers.

The most prominent point to be noticed in connection with both these ideals of wifedom and widowhood is that a wife who is devotedly attached to her husband, must serve him out of pure love and free will only, and must never regard herself as his slave, nor should the husband ever treat her in that light, for a slave after all is a slave, and never serves his master out of free will. Consequently, freedom from all thralldom, such as thralldom of law, of custom or of public voice, must distinguish a woman in her devotion to her husband, either living or dead ; and a wife or a widow's love for her husband, which is not the outcome of her pure free will, cannot be called a true devotion.

If it is contended that a widower should equally abstain from remarriage after the death of his wife and lovingly cherish her memory as a widow does in regard to her deceased husband, then he too is certainly perfectly free to place any such ideal of a conjugal love before him ; and in his case, it will assuredly be regarded as an act of a greater sacrifice and of a grander nobility of character than in the case of a widow, in as much as he does thereby deny to himself a privilege that has been accorded to his sex by law. Essentially *Vedanta* discourages all marriage, whether of males or females, in order to enable men as well as women to strive for realisation of the Self, unfettered by all incumbrances; and when such is the case, it will no doubt look upon all such sacrifices on the part of men and women as rightly directed, provided the object is Realisation and nothing else. The sexual instinct is already working a havoc in man to the detriment of his real and vital interest ; and therefore, the more it is suppressed the better. Thus there can be no question as regards the sublimity of this ideal of perfect chastity among widows and widowers, an exceptional conception of chastity though it may appear, wherein all carnal association with the opposite sex whether lawful or otherwise, or even the very thought of it, is regarded as destructive of the chief ideal of spirituality to which all these minor ideals are primarily intended to lead. If, however, a widower is not able to act up to the ideal and takes advantage of the privilege accorded to him by law in entering the married life again, it does not follow necessarily therefrom that widows also in regard to whom it has now become a custom to live the life of widowhood, be dragged down from their lofty pedestal of chastity, no matter if the said ideal has its origin in a custom or law only. All our customs and laws are intended to apply to our conditioned state and outside that state, *i.e.*, in what is called the transcendental state, there is no law to govern us. The ideal of widowhood, therefore, when it is not complied with in response to any custom, but through pure love and out of free will, must be

taken as indicative of a transcendental state of our womanhood. This ideal does certainly lose all its sublimity, if practiced under the tyranny of a custom or law, but it is not any how advisable that because the ideal is complied with more or less under the thralldom of custom or public voice or that because certain widows have not been able to curb their passion, it should be abandoned once for all, specially when it is remembered that the ideal bespeaks of a very grand and noble characteristic of our womanhood.

But both these high ideals of our womanhood are now fast disappearing under the influence of the new thought that is advancing rapidly making its converts both among men and women and placing before them the new ideal of perfect freedom for both the husband and the wife, whether it be in the direction of conjugality or any other relationship between the two, thus loosening all the sacred ties that formerly bound them together.

A Hindu wife or a widow who realises the above grand ideal of devotion to her husband, whether alive or deceased, ever lives a yogic life. What that yogic life is, is explained in the next chapter.



VII.—THE IDEAL OF A YOGIC LIFE.

The question now is : what is that without which none of the ideals which form the subjects of this work can be attained ? The answer is that without the practice of Yoga in one shape or the other, not a single ideal mentioned above can be realized to any extent. The ideal of work or that of sufferings leading to bliss requires, as already explained, the living of a strict yogic life, while a disciple or a pupil receiving spiritual or temporal instruction can best acquire knowledge when he is united in yoga with his preceptor or teacher, or in other words, when there is a concentration of mind produced in him at the time he is hearing his master's lectures or is reading a book. The love of God is in itself a Yoga, the grandest of all Yogas—*i.e.*, a complete absorption of one self in the love of the Supreme Being. A loving wife when completely devoted to her husband forgets all about her individual existence ; and is therefore, ever living a yogic life. Utter devotion or renunciation is at the bottom of all the Yogas, but the one is not produced without producing the other, as said by Sri Krishna.

What is Yoga ? The word *yoga* literally means 'to unite.' There are several Yogas mentioned in the Gita, but all of them can conveniently be classed under three main divisions, *viz.* :—

- (1) The *Karma Yoga*.
- (2) The *Dhyana Yoga*.
- (3) The *Sanyasa Yoga*.

The *Karma Yoga* unites a doer of work with the work in his hand, and he is considered the best worker who is completely lost in his work, as already illustrated in a previous chapter of this work.

The *Dhyana Yoga* is one which unites a man with the object on which he is meditating. When the object of meditation is the Supreme Being, it is called *Bhakti Yoga*.

The *Sanyasa Yoga* is one which unites the lower self of a man with the Supreme Self, the former being merged into the latter, or in other words, the Ego as it is called is realised as but a reflection of the one *Atman* or Self which it actually is but which is taken to be separate from it through illusion or ignorance about the *Atman* being the only one Reality. This Yoga is further divided into two classes, *viz* :—

(1) *Vairagya* or gradual withdrawal of the mind from all desires and sense-objects seen or unseen, preparatory to attainment of the ideal of Divine Love or Self-Knowledge.

(2) True *Sanyasa* or renunciation of all actions following the attainment of Self-Knowledge.

This *Vairagya* forms the most prominent feature of both the *Bhakti* and *Jnana Yogas* as they are called. It is practised in two ways:—

(1) By becoming unattached to the fruits of actions, or by surrendering all the fruits of actions to God ;

(2) By what is called *arpana*, *i.e.*, by offering or dedicating to God a thing or an act before it is actually used or undertaken.

As regards this particular mode of *Sanyasa Yoga* called *arpana*, Sri Krishna speaks to Arjuna as follows :—

“Whatever thou doest, O Arjuna, whatever thou eatest and whatever thou givest away, do all this as an offering unto Me, and thus thou shalt be freed from the bondage of all actions.”

This offering of every thing to God is what is technically called *Sanyasa Yoga* or the Yoga of renunciation, *i.e.*, the denial by a man of a thing or an act to himself without first making an offering of it or dedicating it to God. Ordinarily a man when taking his meals, repeats some *mantra*, and sprinkles a little water around the plate or the dish containing his food, believing that he has thereby made the necessary offering to God. But is this the real offering within the meaning of the above text of the Gita? What I think is conveyed by the above text is that a man when eating or doing any other act, should entirely forget the

presence of his little self, of his little individuality, of the lower ego as it is called, which always takes pride in thinking itself to be the doer as well as the enjoyer. When this lower ego is, as it were, obliterated through Yoga of renunciation, or in other words through denial of a thing or an act to one self without first offering or dedicating it to God, the idea of one's being the doer or enjoyer is destroyed at least for the time being, and in that state, the particular act of eating or any other act may be considered as an offering unto the Higher Self which is ever present, but which is unmanifest as long as the idea of one's being the actor and enjoyer is predominant. This Higher Self is the same as the Lord manifest within every body. But one who has no control over his hunger or is unable to restrain his appetite for tasting a delicious dish, must be considered at the time of offering that dish to God as offering his leavings only, he already having tasted the food, as it were, in his mind ; and thus instead of saying that he is eating the *prasada* or the remnants of the food partaken of by the Lord, he is, on the contrary, himself offering his own leavings to Him. For such persons it would be far better, if instead of making offerings to God in the above way, they fed a poor hungry man out of the food intended as an offering to God, as that would certainly be a true offering to Him. In ancient times there was no need for this, as poor men in the shape of guests or *atithis* were invariably fed by every house-holder before his partaking of his own meals.

Yoga as may be supposed does not necessarily consist in practicing severest austerities, for example, sitting before fire in the midday sun during the hottest part of the year or exposing oneself to the severest cold of winter. On the contrary, what a true *Yoga* is and what are the characteristics of a *Yogi* will be gleaned from the following passages of the *Gita* :—

1. Whose heart is filled with satisfaction by knowledge and realisation, and is changeless, whose senses are con-

quered and to whom a lump of earth, stone, and gold are the same—such a man is in fact a true *Yogi*.

2. A *Yogi* should constantly practice concentration of the mind, retiring into solitude, with the senses subdued, free from hope and the idea of possession.

3. With the heart serene and fearless, firm in the vow of a *Brahmachari*, (*i.e.*, observing a life of strict celibacy or continence), with the mind controlled, and thinking of Me, let a man sit in *Yoga*, having Me as his Supreme Goal.

4. Success in *Yoga* is not for him who eats too much or too little nor, O Arjuna, for him who sleeps too much or too little.

5. To him who is temperate in eating and recreation, in his activities, and in sleep and wakefulness, *Yoga* becomes the destroyer of evil.

6. As a lamp in a spot sheltered from the wind does not flicker, even such has been the simile used for a *Yogi* of subdued mind, practicing concentration in the Self.

7. Abandoning without reserve all desire and completely restraining by the mind alone, the whole group of senses from their objects in all directions, with the intellect set in patience, with the mind fastened on the Self, let a *Yogi* attain quietitude by degrees ; let him not think of anything else.

8. Through whatever reason the restless and unsteady mind wanders away, let him curbing it from that, bring it under the subjugation of the Self alone.

9. With the mind concentrated by *Yoga*, with the eye of evenness for all things, a *Yogi* beholds the Self in all beings and all beings in his own self.

10. He who judges of pleasure or pain everywhere by the same standard as he applies to himself—that *Yogi*, O Arjuna, is regarded as the highest.

11. He who can withstand in this world before the liberation from the body, the impulse arising from lust and anger—such a man is considered as steadfast in *Yoga*.

12. Whose happiness is within whose relaxation is within, whose illumination is within—that *Yogi* alone gains absolute freedom from the bondage of *Maya* or matter.

13. With imperfections exhausted, doubts dispelled, senses controlled, engaged in the good of all beings, the *Yogis* obtain absolute freedom.

14. The *yogi* having controlled his senses sits focussed on Me as the Supreme. He is a man of steady wisdom whose senses are under control.

15. An unsteady man can have no knowledge. Nor can he meditate. To the unmeditative there is no peace, and how can one without peace have happiness?

16. The self-controlled man moving among objects with senses under restraint and free from attraction and aversion attains to tranquility.

Spirituality does not depend upon the reading of Scriptures, or upon learned interpretations of Sacred Books or upon fine theological discussions, but upon the realisation of the Truth through *Yoga*. This is true not only in regard to spirituality but in regard to the attainment of every other ideal also. A *Yogi* with a true insight into the real nature of things and with the aid of his *Yoga* power which makes him directly perceive things which cannot be revealed by the senses, can work wonders. These powers begin to manifest in the soul that is awakened to the realisation of the Truth. Says the Swami Abhedananda :—

“ Our true Self is all-knowing by its nature. It is the source of infinite knowledge within us. Being bound by the limitations of time, space and causation, we cannot express all the powers that we possess in reality. The higher we rise above these limiting conditions, the more we can manifest the divine qualities of omniscience and omnipotence.”

How can we unfold the knowledge that lies hidden up in our nature ? The answer is, not with the aid of books only, not through the study of external phenomena alone, but chiefly by studying our own nature, and by practicing the different branches of *Yoga*. In ancient India, every

Hindu was obliged as a part of his religious duty, to develop through daily practice certain powers and to strive to attain to the realisation of higher truths. The science of *Yoga* is like other sciences based on experience, and the truths thus gained through experience and investigations were preached by their masters to their pupils who were also asked to practice them for themselves before accepting them merely on authority. Thus the science of *Yoga* became a practical thing and came into vogue in every day life.

Among the *Yogas* the one that specially deals with the mind and psychic powers is designated *Raja Yoga*, i.e., the highest of all the *Yogas*. It may be called the science of applied psychology. Its aim is to remove all mental obstructions and to gain a perfectly controlled healthy mind. The main purpose of its training is to develop and strengthen the power of concentration and to lead the seeker after truth through the path of concentration to meditation, and finally to the realisation of the truth. It teaches that mind is the sovereign power and that when its forces are properly concentrated upon any particular object, the true nature of that object is at once revealed. The power of concentration is greater than sense power or than that which can be gained by the help of instruments. If we can develop it by controlling our mental faculties by making the mind introspective, and by checking all distractions which draw the mind outside, and can direct our concentrated energy towards our higher Self, then not only the true nature of the individual ego will be disclosed but many other wonders will be revealed. *Raja Yoga* tells us that we should not think so much of what will happen after death, but that we should make the best use of the present and unfold the latent powers which we already possess, while it reminds us again and again of the fact that the advancement made in this life will be the foundation of future progress. The only things which we can carry out of life are our character, our experience and the knowledge gained therefrom. They are our real possessions ; and it is these which *Raja*

Yoga helps to develop ; since its object is to mould the character and lead the student to the realisation of all truths culminating in the realisation of the Highest and the Ultimate Truth. *

VIII. DIVINE INSPIRATION IN MAN INFLUENCING HIS ACTIONS AND DESTINY.

Sri Krishna's final advice to Arjuna is that if he takes to *Bhakti Marga*, i.e., if he places his entire reliance upon God, then the course open to him is as follows :—

“Do thou all actions taking refuge in Me only—by My grace thou shalt attain to the Eternal Immutable State. Resigning mentally all deeds in Me, having Me, as the highest Goal and resorting to *Buddhi Yoga* (i.e., path of devotion to actions without attachment to the fruits thereof) do thou ever fix thy mind on Me, and then thou by My grace shalt overcome all obstacles. Or relinquishing all *Dharmas*, i.e., duties, take refuge in Me alone ; I will liberate thee from all sins ; grieve not.”

A question now arises as to what is this Grace of the Lord ? Does it descend on the righteous alone or on the unrighteous as well ? Is it left entirely to man whether he be a righteous or an unrighteous man ? In short what is the position of the Lord in relation to the universe ? Almost all the religions in the world, Hinduism included, say that everything is pre-ordained by the Lord either by His Omnipotent Will or in view of the works done by man. Nothing takes place without His Will, and if He wills that a man be righteous, then alone he is righteous, otherwise not. In the Vedanta, Iswara or the *Antaryamin* as He is called, is taken as an Inter-Ruler within every being, directing man's actions and inspiring him to do this or that. Apparently, in such a view of God, He is no more a just God. He is incessantly impelling men to acts whether virtuous or sinful, and then it is He alone who awards punishments or rewards as the case may be. Draupadi once raised this very question before Yudhishthira and made rather very sharp remarks about God Himself pre-ordaining every thing or Himself directing man's actions, and then through His Almighty Power

which none can question holding Himself aloof at the time of awarding punishment to men for their evil actions. She also pointed out His injustice in showering His favours on an unrighteous man like Duryodhana, depriving at the same time Yudhisthira who ever lived a life of righteousness, even of what he possessed.

This riddle has presented itself for solution in every age and in every country ; and attempts have been made to solve it by philosophers as well as by religious men, each in the light of his own philosophy or religion. Consequently, there are several solutions that have been offered of this knotty question, all of which can be reduced into two main beliefs ; *viz.*:—

(1) Beliefs wherein the influence of the Divine Will on the actions and the destiny of man is not admitted. According to this belief, man is a free agent and reaps the fruits of the seeds of his own actions which he has himself sown. Everyman's actions bear fruit of themselves without any external intervention such as that of a soul or of a God. Those who hold this view, have no belief in the existence of God, or if they have, they do not regard Him as having either an omnipotent will or an omnipotent power, He being taken in the light of a Supreme Judge only or utmost in that of a Supreme Ruler.

(2) Beliefs wherein it is held that the Divine Will is constantly influencing man's actions and is the main factor in shaping his destiny. Those who hold this view are further divided into two main classes, *viz.*:—

(a) Those who believe in the Almighty Will of God and not in His Almighty Power. These are the dualists of India whose belief is that soul though a separate entity, is not created by God. It is eternally separate from Him and is eternally existing side by side with Him though completely dependent upon His Will. There is, however, a phase of belief among these dualists wherein it is held that God though essentially separate from soul, is ever interpenetrating it ; and therefore, soul has no existence independent of God. In both these phases of belief, the

relationship between God and man is that of a master and a slave, with this difference that in one belief the influence of Divine Will is communicated from outside, while in the other, the Divine Spark is already present within the soul of man, constantly influencing his actions and destiny.

(b) Those who believe in God possessing both the Almighty Power and the Almighty Will. According to this belief nothing can exist or can occur against His Supreme Will. There can be no independence in any body either personal or in regard to actions. In this belief the relationship between man and God is not only that of a slave and his master, but also that of a created being and his Creator. This is the view held by all Semitic religions.

In both these phases of belief man is not a free agent and is entirely dependent upon God. The followers of both say when praying to Him : " Thy Will be done," as nothing can take place against His Will; and whatever acts are done by man, are done subject to His Supreme Will only. A slave is after all a slave, and he is never a free agent. He must, therefore, be subservient to the will of his master. But these two phases of belief differ in one main point which is this that when according to the Indian Dualists man's own actions are judged in awarding punishments or rewards as the case may be, though the Lord has power to forgive any evil act through His grace, in the belief of the Semitic schools, his present conditions of life are entirely dependent upon His Almighty Will.

There is, however, one more view which is quite distinct from all the views described above, and it is the *Adwaitic* or non-dualistic view of the *Vedanta*. According to this view, as there is really one Absolute Existence only without a second, there is essentially no soul, no God, no slave, no master. Man is essentially free and not bound. Metaphysically, there are neither actions, nor is there any agency, neither rewards nor punishments ; and if any such thing is at all experienced by man, it is the result of his delusion only, or of his ignorance about the actual Reality,

in which case only the conclusions arrived at by the dualistic schools of India hold true, otherwise not at all. This *advaita* view is supported by the Gita wherein it is stated as follows :—

“ The Lord does not create actions for man. Neither is He Himself an agent, nor does He create agency in man in regard to acts done by him. He is also not the cause of man's reaping the fruits of his acts, nor does any responsibility attach to Him in respect of acts done by man.”

Here a question arises : how can the declaration of the Lord in the Gita be true in view of the teaching of the *Vedas* and the *Shastras*, wherein it is stated that it is the Lord only who is constantly inspiring man's acts whether good or bad, and that nothing can be done by man unless directed to it by God. But having regard to this Vedic teaching, a further question arises as regards the justice of God in dealing punishment to man for acts of which he is the doer only through God's inspiration, ever working in him for good or bad. Sri Krishna's reply to this question is that metaphysically speaking, neither man is the actor, nor is there any such thing as the inspiration of God working in him leading him to good or bad acts,—both God and man being essentially the Absolute *Brahman*, a Being that is entirely free from all limitations as regards the one being the Master and the other being His slave. It is the ignorance of man only in considering himself as an individual entity separate from the Lord that has produced this delusion of a slave and a Master about himself and God, the slave being an instrument only in the hands of his Master. Thus it is man alone who has himself created under delusion, or through ignorance about the Reality which he himself is, a state of affairs wherein he who is himself the master, places himself in the position of a slave at the mercy of his Master the Lord God, whom too he himself has brought into existence as a Ruler over himself. When this relationship of a Master and a slave is once acknowledged between God and man, which the dualistic sects consider as a reality, all the acts of the

latter will be done under compulsion from the Lord, as long as he regards himself as a slave only, the slave having no free will to exercise. The Lord is acknowledged as a Master and man as His slave by all dualistic religions ; and it is for this reason that when doing an act, a man prays to God and says : ‘ Lord, Thy Will be done ’ ; because His Will can never be set aside by man his creature or slave. If He wills that a man be righteous, then alone he is righteous, and then alone he will be inspired to do good acts only. It is not that the Lord Himself is the direct cause of any good or bad actions of man. Not the least. His influence on his actions is to this extent only that the good or bad tendencies of his mind, due to his past *Sanskaras* or seeds of work done by him in his previous births, are awakened according as it is His Will that he should do a good or a bad act at any particular time, and when his good or bad tendencies are thus awakened, currents of good or bad thoughts are set in motion, leading to good or bad acts. A vicious man is sometimes seen doing a good act. How is this ? Because it is the Divine pleasure that he should do a good act ; and, therefore, the current of evil tendencies is stopped for the time being and that of good thoughts is set in motion. It is for want of this Divine Grace that notwithstanding that a man tries to live a righteous life, he fails in his attempts, the reason being that the current of his evil tendencies which is set in motion on account of his past *Sanskaras*, is not stopped until it is God’s pleasure to stop it and make his endeavours fruitful. The author of this work is perhaps most in want of the Lord’s Grace, but it has not as yet come to him, his impure past *Sanskaras* coming in the way of all his endeavours for living a saintly life, upsetting all his plans which can never prosper until it is His pleasure to make them fruitful. The intermediate causes that are also ever active in working out a man’s destiny, do also follow His pleasure ; and the production of these causes is necessary in order that this drama of life be continually acted up ; for in truth, this

world is a stage only wherein players and actors are incessantly acting their parts with God as their *Sutradhara*, holding the wires in His hand, with which He keeps them continually dancing.

It, however, takes place though very rarely, that the Lord's pleasure has the effect of changing a habitual or confirmed sinner into a saint by at once drifting his current of thoughts into a virtuous channel only, the seeds of his past evil actions having been burnt through his Grace. Generally, in such cases a revulsion of feelings takes place all of a sudden, due to His Grace only.

Apparently, in such a belief there is no justice when everything depends on the pleasure and will of God. To speak the truth, justice can be there only where the transaction is between free men, and not between one who is free as well as all-powerful and another who is a slave and completely subject to the will of the other. In such a case whatever is dispensed to him by his powerful master must thankfully be received by him as a favour only. Those who look upon the Lord as their Beloved whom they love devotedly, regard all evils coming to them as messengers of His love only. The Lord, however, is never unjust like worldly masters, for He ever takes regard of the ultimate good of man in dealing his dispensations to him, that good accruing to him either in the present life or in the lives to come, which can never be foreseen by man. It is true, His Grace has in the past, descended mostly on sinners ; and to speak the truth, they alone are in need of it, as those who are already living a righteous life, do not need any such favour. But this act of Grace descending on sinners will certainly be looked upon as unfair to those who have been undergoing all sorts of troubles and sufferings in order to lead a life of righteousness. The question, however, is : can these so-called righteous men ever live a righteous life without God's Will or without His inspiration ? As regards the theory of *Karma* that the Lord dispenses His favours in accordance with the *Karma* of each, it may be stated here that this would be an act of

bare justice only, there being no necessity for any expression of the Lord's Grace. But be it remembered here that were it not for the Grace of God which seasons His Justice, no body would ever be freed from the round of births and deaths to which he is subject in virtue of his *Karma*. This theory of Karma is no doubt the only correct explanation of the inequality seen in the world, but a difficulty presents itself herein also, in as much as it is a questionable point whether a slave has ever a free will.

Although the Lord is the inspirer in every body of his acts whether good or bad, He is not touched by those acts. The Gita says :—" All this proceeds from Him only. Though appearing as an actor, He is essentially actionless. Men are deluded and take Him as an actor and dispenser of the fruits of acts, while He is not so. Deluded thus, the world does not know His real nature that He is beyond all idea of actorness, etc. The acts which are ascribed to Him by man under delusion, do not touch Him at all, as He is utterly unattached and neutral as regards all that takes place."

The master alone does his work out of his free will. So when work is done by a master, it is never done under compulsion from any body. His work must at the same time be unfettered by desires, or else those desires will themselves be rather worst masters. In such a state only, work is done out of free will, and it never binds a man. Such workers are those who have known the Reality as it is, wherein there is no longer any idea of a master or a slave. But when a slave who has a master or acknowledges any body as his master, does work under compulsion from the said master, and yet regards himself to be its doer, such a man must be considered as the worst criminal, having usurped the powers of the master ; and, therefore, must suffer for his crime. Such is generally the case with men in this world, for they regard themselves as actors, while they are not so, they being, as it were, capable of doing anything independent of the Lord their Master. When a slave does his work saying that it is his master's

will which he is carrying out—that he is not the doer—all that he is, is but an instrument in the hands of his master, the master is pleased with him and sets him free. Similarly, a man surrendering all the fruits of his work to the Lord or considering himself entirely subservient to His Supreme Will in all his actions, is not at all bound, as will be seen from the following quotation from the Gita :—

“It is Prakriti or Maya (*i.e.*, the Lord’s Power) that makes man to perform actions, but with the understanding deluded by egoism, one regards one self as ‘I am the doer.’ Renouncing all actions to Me, O Arjuna, do thou fix thy mind on Me, then thou by My Grace wilt attain freedom.”

Consequently, a man reaps the fruits of his actions, because he regards himself as actor and is full of egoism saying—‘I have done this virtuous act or that act of charity, having relieved the wants of so many people,’—and is entirely forgetful of the truth that it is really the Lord who has been inspiring him to do those particular acts of virtue. If he takes credit for his good acts, he must also suffer for his evil acts. This can never be that he is left free to ascribe evil acts to God and good acts to himself. It must be clearly understood that no man can ever conscientiously deny his evil acts saying that it is the Lord who has done it and not he himself, having regard to the fact that a man’s conscience bites him the moment he does any crime or sin or as is the case sometimes, when the heat of the moment in which a particular crime was committed subsides.

There is, however, another explanation of the working of this Divine stimulus, as it may be called, through every body. The Divine Essence is believed as pervading all animate and inanimate objects; and in animate objects, *i.e.*, in living beings, a reflection of it is ever active in communicating a stimulus to inner faculties (mind, intellect, etc.), and to *Prana* or vital force already present within every living body, enabling the latter to perform their respective functions. This Divine Essence is, therefore, the Ultimate Source of all power or energy in man, ever

stimulating him to actions good or bad, with due regard to his conditions, the products of his past *sanskaras* or seeds of actions done in previous births. The conditions or limitations to which man is subject vary with each man ; and, therefore, the Divine Impulse has a variable effect in each man, varying with the conditions of each. It is not that a variation takes place in the force itself, but that it has a variable effect in each case with due regard to the conditions of each. Its effect varies with the nature of each man's delusion under which he may be. A man who regards himself as a saint and is at the same time full of egoism on account of it, is under one sort of delusion, while another who is a thief or a rogue, is under another sort of delusion. The Divine Impulse is acting through both, making one do good acts, and the other do acts of theft or robbery. The killing power of a sword, to quote an illustration, is utilised differently by different people, one man using it for murder, and another in the defence of his country against invaders or in saving his own life or lives of innocent people. Consequently, it is as clear as day light that God is not in any way to blame for the evil acts of men though done with the aid of the power which has its source in the power of God only, and He is also not to be praised for his good acts. He does neither justice nor injustice to any body, as He is free from all such attributes.

The above arguments hold good as long as the state of man's delusion lasts in regarding himself as a slave and God as his Master. The question as to why does this delusion exist, can never be asked or answered by one who is himself under delusion. The declaration of the Vedas alluded to above regarding man being but an instrument in the hand of God, is applicable to this state of delusion only. I have tried to offer a plausible solution only of this enigmatical question with due regard to the theory of Karma and the Justice of God. Still many difficulties present themselves in its satisfactory solution in view of the belief of man in the Almighty will and power of God, which

must be maintained, if a God is to be at all worshipped and adored, as a God without omnipotent power or will would no longer be a God. In Vedanta, it is all delusion, and nothing that partakes of a delusion can be perfect.

The true solution of the enigma, however, is what has been offered above, having regard to the teachings of the Gita, which consists in the actual realisation of the truth that there is no such relationship as that of a slave and a Master between man and the Lord, and that man himself is the master or God and not separate from Him, a realisation which also depends on the grace of the Lord only.

The position of the Lord is truly that of a witness of a scene, unconcerned with what is passing before him ; and it is man alone who drags Him into the scene and gives Him all sorts of attributes that do not belong to Him at all. He is all blissful, all perfect, even a shadow of a motive or a relation in Him would be contradictory to His nature. Perhaps the word Lord would be a misnomer here, as that would imply Lordship in Him over His creatures, which idea is absent in his Impersonal Aspect. The proper word is *Atman* or Absolute that is free from all attributes. In Vedanta the aggregate of all individual personalities is Iswara or the Personal God, and the sum-total of ignorance to which each individual personality is subject, is the universal ignorance called *Maya*, which is believed as subject to the will of the Personal God and is described as His *Shakti* or Power. In producing all stimulus within man in the shape of a motive for work or otherwise, it is the Lord's *Maya* that is really active and not the Lord Himself who is actionless. This universal ignorance or *Maya* is ever coming into play, deluding people into the belief that they are all individual personalities separate from one another, and that there is a God or Lord over them. This universal ignorance or nature, as we may call it, has no power of action in itself ; it is nothing but inert matter or force. It is, however, awakened to action by the presence of the Lord or more correctly speaking, the *Atman* or the Absolute, in the same way as men are awakened to work on

the appearance of the sun. It is His light (in His attributeless state) that lights up nature and makes her live and act. This is all the relation between the Lord and the Maya. Metaphysically speaking, there is neither a just nor an unjust God, nor are there His creatures over whom He is ruling, nor is there the Maya or the universal ignorance to delude them into any such belief. There is one Absolute Existence only without a Second.

To sum up, the *Atman* or the Absolute is essentially actionless, although all activity that is perceived in nature is from it only. Essentially neither spirit nor matter is active, and it is the association of the one with the other that causes all activity, just as an essentially actionless rope appears as an active snake through its association with what is called *illusion*, the cause of the illusory snake, the illusion itself having no activity of its own. Or take another illustration, for instance that of a Governor who is invested with certain powers under an Act of the Legislature. The powers are invested in the abstract designation of the Governor, and though all the powers lie in the abstract designation only, they can never be brought into action, until a concrete person holding the office of the Governor exercises them. So the abstract office of the Governor is truly actionless though all the powers lie in it only. The concrete person too has no powers of his own, for he did not possess the said powers before his appointment to his office. It is the association of the abstract office of the Governor with the concrete person holding it that brings about the exercise of all powers. The abstract office, it may be said, illumines, as it were, the concrete person holding it, producing in the latter all the activity required for the exercise of the powers invested in the said abstract office.

The association is merely a sort of illumination of matter by spirit which casts its reflection, as it were, in the mirror of nature, producing the illusion of the existence of distinct entities called *Jivas* or individual souls and of *Iswara* or the Universal Soul also called the Personal God.

no more opening in this world for himself. Of course, we have to fight against adverse circumstances in winning laurels in the battle field of life, in the struggles for more and more enjoyments and comfort; and though at times failures may attend our endeavours in this direction, we are sure of success in the long run, as witnessed by history. Nothing has been gained without immense sacrifices, or even without loss of valuable lives, without numerous defeats and disappointments during the progress of our efforts for a more and more comfortable life. It will, therefore, be a sheer folly to abandon the fruits of our labour of ages for the visionary ideal of renunciation or spirituality.

The above indeed look like words of wisdom and full of great meaning and significance for people whose sole idea of happiness is centered in one's own personality, and confined to the present life only, or at least for such men as have no belief in a here-after, or as have no idea as to what true happiness is. We too cannot dispute their contention as long as one is satisfied with taking the life as they take it, having no other aim than enjoyment so long as we live, no matter howsoever a dear price we may have to pay for it, even in this world, leaving aside the question as to what awaits us after our death. Metaphysically, we too admit, we live in the present only, there being no past, no future, as there is no idea of time, space and causation in the Absolute which we actually are. But when we allow ourselves to be deluded into the thought that we are within time, space and causation, or that we have a relative existence in relation to each other, then certainly, there has been a past and there shall also be a future. There can be no hesitation in holding, as already stated in my former work, the "Mystery of God and the Universe," that the conservation of matter and energy about which there is no doubt, conclusively establishes the immortality of the principle of consciousness (commonly called soul) and that there is a continuity of consciousness after death, is quite a logical conclusion.

The Lord Sri Krishna says in the Gita :—

“An *eternal* portion of Myself, having become a living individual soul in the world of life, draws to itself the five senses with mind for the sixth, abiding in *Prakriti* or matter. Presiding over the ear, the eye, the sense of touch, the sense of taste and the sense of smell, as also the mind, this individual soul is constantly experiencing pleasure and pain in its various births. Still the deluded people do not see the *Atman* or the Supreme Self as the only one Reality that under-lies every individual soul, but those who have the eye of wisdom behold that Supreme Self only as neither the actor nor the enjoyer or sufferer.”

The Jiva or the individual soul is that aspect of the Supreme Self which appears as manifesting itself in every one as the doer and enjoyer or sufferer, being limited by the *Upadhis* (limitations) set up by *Avidya* or ignorance; but in reality both are the same, the former being but a reflection only of the latter ; or it may be compared to the space in a jar which appears as a portion of the infinite space owing to the jar being the cause of limitation. Though the *Atman* is nearest and comes most easily within the range of every body's consciousness in a variety of functions, still all do not see it or realise it, because of their complete subservience to sense-objects. As stated in the Gita, this *Atman* exists pervading all, with hands and feet everywhere, with eyes, heads and mouths everywhere, shining by the functions of all the senses, yet without the senses, absolute yet sustaining all, devoid of *gunas* (attributes) yet their experiencer ; without and within all beings ; because subtle, it is incomprehensible to the unillumined ; it is far when unknown, and it is near to the person who has realised it, impartible, yet exists, as it were, divided in beings ; the Light even of lights ; the Knowledge itself and the One Thing to be known, the goal of knowledge, dwelling in the hearts of all.

We see a beautiful object and are enchanted by it. Does the beauty or enchantment lie in the material particles composing the object ? Not at all. It is true we see only the

configuration of the object and are enchanted by its symmetrical appearance, according to our idea of symmetry, which varies with different people ; and if that symmetry were destroyed by any cause, the object would no longer fascinate us. The symmetry of the object, according to our particular idea of symmetry, produces a state of concentration of our minds which, as it were, unveils the Abstract Beauty of the *Atman* or the Divine Beauty already present within us, but hidden under thick covers of sensual desires preying upon our hearts. Thus all beauty or fascination lies in the *Atman* only and not in the material objects wherein it is merely reflected through the concentration of the perceiver's mind. Such being the case, why should we not love and adore the unfading Divine Beauty, the ultimate source of all perceptions of beauty by us, instead of adoring mere fleeting shadows of that Beauty, as reflected in the material objects that are constantly subject to change ? Or when we pay our adoration even to a shadow of that Divine Beauty in the form of a lovely woman that has won our hearts, why should we not regard it as an act of reverence to the Glory of God only, reflected in that woman through the concentration of our minds due to the attraction of that feminine beauty ? A painter that paints a landscape or any other scenery, howsoever an exquisite specimen of art his painting may be, produces after all a picture of the shadow only of the Real Beauty, as no painter has ever been able or will ever be able to paint that real Divine Beauty, the source of all beauties perceived by us, which is beyond the comprehension of a worldly painter, and, therefore, completely beyond the touch of his pencil or brush.

Deluded people, however, ascribe the fascination produced by an object to its material configuration only, forgetting that it would no longer enchant a man, if a change were produced in its symmetry, as is understood by him according to his particular idea of symmetry, or that it would never produce any charming effect on the mind of another person whose idea of symmetry is quite different from that of the first person, the reason in both

cases being that the object will fail to concentrate the mind upon itself. Consequently, under the effects of this delusion, we are ever adoring what are mere fleeting shadows of the real Beauty, and are constantly deserting one shadow for another in our vain attempts for the perception of the Ideal Beauty which though ever present within us, is never realised by us as long as we are under the aforesaid delusion, ascribing beauty to material objects instead of to its original Divine source.

The next question is : why is it that we are fascinated more by living bodies than by inanimate objects ? The reason is that Divine Beauty expresses itself the most through living bodies, though varying in its expression with the limitations to which it is apparently subject ; and it shines most of all through human bodies wherein its unfoldment is reached though rarely to the highest pitch, owing to a state of perfect harmony being produced between the perceiver of the beauty and the beauty perceived, or in other words, between the lover and his beloved, ending in the utter forgetfulness of himself by the former in the love of the latter, there being no other consciousness than that of love and love alone, which state can only be produced when there is the highest reflection of the Divine Beauty.

Although the Atman is manifest everywhere, and as stated above, is seen as expressing itself even through various functions of our own body and our every day life, and although its Beauty or Glory too which is the only Real Beauty and of which the various beauties perceived by us are mere reflections, is ever present before our eyes in these reflections, deluded men do not see it, nay even deny it *in toto*, comforting themselves with the belief that it is nature that is doing all this ; the inert matter, as it were, is capable of acting without being associated with spirit. What is called intelligence is a fine state of matter only in the *Vedanta*, and that too is incapable of functioning in any way without the spirit or the principle of consciousness reflecting its power through it. No doubt spirit is

actionless, but it is the light of spirit that awakens by its proximity or through its reflection the inert matter or nature, producing all activity in it, even leading to the creation and dissolution of the world. Deluded people who do not understand this real relationship between spirit and matter, either take the former only as active in the shape of an individual soul or of a Personal God, or take the latter only as self-acting or self-evolving.

Thus it is conclusively shewn that all does not end with this life, as is the belief of most of the people who follow the Epicurean doctrine. That there is an entity and that too an eternal entity call it *Atman*, Spirit or universal consciousness or whatever you choose, which subsists after death ; and when this is once admitted, it also logically follows therefrom that the moral responsibility which attaches to every person for his evil actions, and impure desires, must accompany the doer even after death, in case he has not already paid a penalty for them in this life, to bear fruit in subsequent lives, or as it is called, in the other world in the shape of terrestrial sufferings or those of a hell.

Admitting our relative condition only as true or taking our present life alone as real, we have a need for the application of these ideals even then to our relative conditions. It will not perhaps be denied even by the advocates of the theory of enjoyment that a keen thirst for enjoyments ends in misery and pain only ; and the more we seek satiation of our desires, the more we are confronted with sufferings, the result of reaction, stimulating us to more and more endeavours to counteract the effects of that reaction, which end in greater and greater sufferings. In this connection the following sayings of the Swami Vivekananda that are full of wisdom and instruction for every body who is ever in search of pleasures, will, it is hoped, be read with interest and advantage :—

1. Desire is infinite, its fulfilment limited. Desire is unlimited in everyone, the power of fulfilment varies. Thus, some are more successful than others in life.

2. This limitation is the bondage we are struggling against, all our lives.

3. We desire only the pleasurable, not the painful.

4. The objects of desire are all complex—pleasure-giving or pain-bringing mixed up.

5. We do not or cannot see the painful parts in objects, we are charmed with only the pleasurable portion, and thus grasping the pleasurable, we unwittingly draw in the painful.

6. At times we vainly hope, that in our case only the pleasurable will come leaving the painful aside, which never happens.

7. Our desires also are constantly changing. What we would prize to-day, we would reject to-morrow. The pleasure of the present will be the pain of the future, the loved, hated, and so on.

8. We vainly hope that in the future life, we shall be able to gather in only the pleasurable, to the exclusion of the painful.

9. The future is only the extension of the present.

10. Whosoever seeks pleasure in objects, will get it, but he must take the pain with it.

11. All objective pleasures in the long run must bring pain, because of the fact of change or death.

12. As desire increases, so increases the power of pleasure, so the power of pain.

13. The finer the organism, the higher the culture, the greater is the power to enjoy pleasure, and the sharper are the pangs of pain.

14. Mental pleasures are greatly superior to physical joys. Mental pains are more poignant than physical tortures.

15. We are struggling hard to conquer pain, succeeding in the attempt and yet creating new perhaps intenser pain at the same time.

16. We achieve success, and we are overthrown by failure ; we pursue pleasure, and we are pursued by pain.

17. We say we do, we are made to do ; we say we work, we are made to work. We are in the crowd, we cannot stop, must go on—it needs no cheering. Had it not been so, no amount of cheering would make us undertake all this pain and misery for a grain of pleasure, which alas ! in most cases is only a hope.

18. Our pessimism is a dead reality, our optimism is a faint cheering, making the best of a bad job. This is true as long as one is struggling in the relative plane only.

Consequently, the quotation from the Gita given on the reverse of the title page of this work is fully applicable to every phase of life, whether its object be spirituality or worldliness. The truth contained therein cannot be controverted.

In our attempts to act up to each and every ideal, our watchword must be freedom and not slavery or bondage to any particular thought, belief or custom. That woman only is a truly devoted wife who worships her husband out of her free will and out of pure love for him, and not from any selfish motive or in conformity with any custom or usage. If she does so under the thralldom of custom only, then that can never be called a true devotion. A lover of God must likewise be quite unfettered in his love for Him, *i.e.*, not fettered by any desire or prayer or any selfish motive. This has already been explained at length in its proper place.

With the Hindus, the prominent idea is *Mukti* or freedom from birth and death. With the Westerners it is *Dharma*. Now *Dharma* is that which makes man seek earthly or heavenly happiness, with due regard to the laws of morality and ethics. One who wishes to attain to *Mukti* or freedom from birth and death, regards all happiness of this world as slavery and also the happiness obtainable in the heavens, because neither this world nor the next is beyond the laws of nature, as said in the Gita wherein it is stated :—“ There is no entity on earth or a gain in heaven among the *Devas*, that is devoid of all these three *Gunas* born of *Prakriti* (*i.e.*, laws of nature.)” Only the slavery

of this world is to that of the next, as an iron chain is to a gold one. Men must, therefore, endeavour to obtain this freedom from birth and death in order to obtain the unending Bliss. The Hindu scriptures say :—“ No doubt *Moksha* is far superior to *Dharma* or duty, but *Dharma* should be finished first of all. A story is related in the *Mahabharata* about a certain Brahmana who leaving his old father and mother unprovided and uncared for at home had repaired to the forest for a life of asceticism, his object being *moksha* or salvation. This Brahmana led by circumstances had once the occasion of seeking the advice of a butcher who was well established in his *Dharma*, as to what course of action he should adopt having regard to his future welfare. He was told by the butcher that attendance to one's *Dharma* or duty must take precedence over all considerations, and that his foremost duty was to attend to the service of his old parents, and until they gave him free permission to seek the ideal of a recluse's life, he could not lead that life without incurring sin.

The Vedas were the first to find and proclaim the way to *moksha*, but it is the Vedic religion only which considers ways and means, and lays down rules for the fourfold attainment by man of *Artha* (wealth), (2) *Kama* (desires), (3) *Dharma* (duties) and 4 *Moksha* (salvation). The performance by one of duties imposed upon him in virtue of his being a member of a family or society, is obligatory ; and, therefore, Sri Krishna lays much stress on it, for He says :—

“ In the beginning of creation, O sinless one, the two-fold path was given by Me to the world, the path of knowledge (*i.e.*, contemplation on Self) for the meditative, and the path of work to those persons who were devoted to worldly life. Do thou always perform actions that are obligatory. But for the man who is devoted to contemplation on Self and is satisfied with the realisation of the Self, there is no obligatory duty.”

The watchword with the Hindus is *Moksha* or salvation as already stated, without caring much for the duties

which devolve upon every one in virtue of his being a member of a family or society. The watchword with the Westerners is duty without caring much for *Moksha* or spirituality which means an escape from all thralldom of matter.

The Hindus are more in need of practicing *Dharma* or duty, while the Westerners want devotion not only to duty but also to the contemplative side of man's life, wherein alone are disclosed the grand secrets about the nature of the *Atman* or the Absolute, and wherein only is revealed the secret as to what is the ultimate aim or end of our life.

Both can shake hands and settle the dispute between them by coming to an agreement on this point which is as follows, as pointed out by Sri Krishna :—

“ Do thou, O Arjuna, always perform actions which are obligatory, but without attachment, as by performing actions without attachment one is not bound. He who restraining the organs of action, sits revolving in his mind thoughts of enjoyments and pleasure, he of deluded understanding is verily ! a hypocrite. But whoever controlling the senses and the mind, is unattached and directs his organs of actions to the path of work, certainly excels. The self-controlled man, moving among objects with senses under restraint and free from attraction and aversion, attains to tranquility.”

On the other hand, His advice to those who are desirous of taking to a life of contemplation, renouncing all actions, is as follows :—

“ Without performing work none reaches the state of worklessness ; by merely giving up work, no one attains perfection. He should be known a constant *Sanyasin* who (while engaged in action) neither likes nor dislikes. Know that to be devotion to action which is called renunciation, for none can follow the path of action without forsaking *sankalpa* (i.e., a habit of planning or projecting, etc).”

In short both the *Karma* and the *Sanyasa Yogas* have, in a way, been reconciled with one another by Sri Krishna,

and that both lead a man to one and the same goal is quite clear from the following quotation from the Gita :—

“ Children and not wise men speak of the path of contemplation as distinct from that of the performance of work. He who truly lives in one, gains the fruits of both. The plane which is reached by contemplative men is also reached by those who are devoted to actions. He who sees both these paths as one sees really.”

Those who understand this secret of work and of renunciation, will not dispute as to which is superior to which.

Now the question is : which of the two means should a man adopt in order to attain the end ? The good for him who wants *Dharma* is one, and the good for him who desires *Moksha* is another. This is the great truth which the Lord Sri Krishna has tried in the Gita so much to explain. For the one who is seeking *Moksha*, His advice is that he should see that he has no enemy, is friendly and compassionate to all, is free from the feelings of ‘ me and mine,’ is even-minded in pain and pleasure and is forbearing. To another who has not acquired as yet the necessary fitness for a life of contemplation, and is, therefore, bound to attend to his duties, His advice is what He gave to Arjuna :—

“ Yield not to unmanliness, O son of Pritha. Ill doth it befit thee. Cast off this mean faint-heartedness and arise and fight specially when thou fightest in a righteous cause. Do thy duty as a Kshatriya, and if thou shalt not do thy duty, thou shalt incur sin.”

Of course work is always mixed with good and evil, and in working one has to incur sin more or less, but Sri Krishna has quieted all doubts on this point also by saying that all actions must be performed without attachment to the fruits thereof. When a man works unattached and has no selfish motive to gain thereby, he remains untainted throughout. The secret lies in doing work without attachment and without selfish motives, as when done with selfish motives, a work may end in injury to others. This way of devotion to

work, as said by Sri Krishna, instead of binding a man to the world, opens the path to *moksha* or salvation.

Many a lesson of wisdom can be learnt by the study of the Gita which should form the Bible of modern India, nay of the world itself. India has, therefore, to deliver a message, founded on the teachings of the Gita, to her own such sons as have become thoroughly Europeanized in external habits and in ways of thought and ideas, and as are constantly crying their eyes out and praying to the Europeans to save them:—"We are degraded, we have come down to the level of brutes ; O ye European people ! you are our saviours, have pity on us and raise us from our fallen state." And this message to her such children as well as to those who are trampling ruthlessly her ideals, is briefly summed up in the following words which were uttered by the great Swami Vivekananda :—

"Excuse me if I say that it is sheer ignorance and want of proper understanding to think that our national ideals are all a mistake. ' First go to other countries and study carefully their manners and customs with your own eyes—not with others '—and reflect on them with a thoughtful brain, if you have it ; then read your own scriptures, your ancient literature, travel throughout India, and mark the people of the different parts and their ways and habits with the wide-awake eye of an intelligent and a keen observer not with a fool's eye—and you will see as clear as noonday that hidden under the ashes of the apparent death, the fire of our national life, is yet smouldering ; and that the life of our nation is religion, or spirituality, its language religion, its idea religion ; and your politics, society, municipality, plague-prevention work and famine relief work, all these things will be done as they had been done all along here, only through religion, through spirituality and not through materialism ; otherwise all your fanatic yelling and bewailing will end in nothing my friends."

When the ideal of a life of true spirituality is once attained, other lesser ideals in the material plane are not

difficult of attainment ; and the question as to how to live a happy and a righteous life is easily solved.

I have not herein alluded to the grand Ideal of Love, as depicted in the *Bhagwata Purana*, because I have contented myself with quoting exclusively from the Bhagwad-Gita. That Ideal is Love purely for Love's sake, wherein one has to forsake father, mother, children, wife or husband in order to devote himself or herself exclusively to the love of God. Christ too alludes to this Ideal of Divine Love when he says :—"And everyone that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife or children, or lands for my sake shall inherit everlasting life."

According to the Hindu idea, this everlasting life consists in the perpetual realisation of Divine Love, or in the merging of the devotee's self into the Supreme Self, both being identical in essence. The Hindu loves to be constantly beholding and adoring the Divine Beauty as manifested in Sri Krishna, instead of Venerating or being awed by the Divine Glory, the highest ideal in other creeds. The Hindu ideal is love and love alone, an intense love for God, nothing obstructing him from it. This is indeed the ideal of Sri Radha's love for Sri Krishna, which has been unfortunately so very wrongly understood by most people. Radha represents a human soul that has been refined and awakened to the realisation of its oneness with the Divine Beloved through love and love alone. This devotion to the Divine Ideal requires a complete and unreserved surrender of everything, to God—of body, of mind, and of worldly possessions. This is the real and true *arpana* or offering to God. Though I find that I still lack in my devotion to Sri Krishna, I am, however, presumptuous enough to devote this my humble work as an offering to Him, uttering the word—

Sri Krishnarpanamastu

FINIS.

Santi, Santi, Santi.

Peace, Peace to all.
